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electronics



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His & Hers CE

This Month: MP3 Players

October 2005
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Great theater deserves a great setting.

The sleek, free-flowing lines of Sanus Platinum furniture reflect the beauty of today's digital televisions. And the newest addition, model PFFP flat panel TV stand, opens up possibilities to mount a flat panel television anywhere. An extruded aluminum column extends rigid strength from the steel-framed base to handle flat panel TVs up to 50". The Virtual Axis™ tilting system provides smooth motion with the touch of a fingertip. And features like a hidden cable channel, an adjustable glass shelf and a custom blended silver finish provide the perfect finishing touches to this innovative flat panel TV stand. So if your home theater is short on wall space, your options are now wide open.

SANUS | **SYSTEMS**

THE UNION OF FORM AND FUNCTION

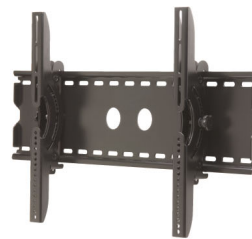
800.359.5520 www.sanus.com

Great theater deserves a great setting.



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Plasma TVs are really making waves. So how do you choose a mount worthy of the splendor of a plasma TV? Easy. Choose a VisionMount™ flat panel TV wall mount from Sanus. Its simple elegance gives you one of the strongest, most durable mounts...with installation completed in just minutes. And the Virtual Axis™ mechanism allows you to adjust the tilt with an effortless fingertip touch...even if your TV weighs 175 pounds. So wherever your plasma TV is destined to be, VisionMount can easily handle your installation and positioning needs, and you can spend your time reflecting on the real beauty of your home theater.



VisionMount™ model VMPLb shown. Fits virtually any flat panel TV from 32" up to 60". Available in black and silver.

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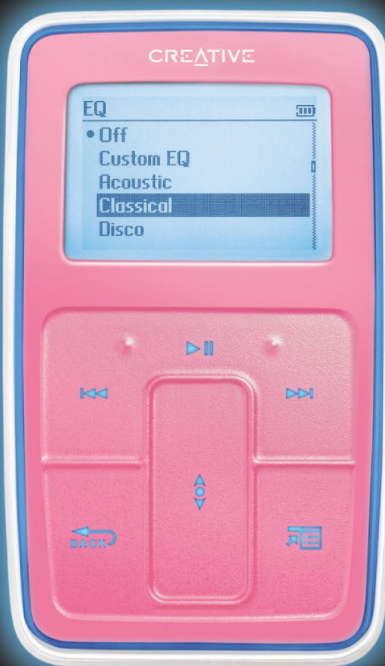
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- Voice recorder
- Intuitive vertical touch pad control
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us.creative.com/zenmicro



The color of Z E N



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feature topic

Digital Camcorders

Camcorders capture the important moments of our lives better than any other CE device we have, and with better technology and lower prices, they're easier than ever to own and operate. We'll tell you what to look for when buying your digital camcorder, and we'll also give you fun ways to get the whole family involved in using it.

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Give The Gift Of Digital Video

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Reasons I Love These Devices

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Give Your Camcorder To Your Kids



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Open

There's always something new, interesting, and stylish happening in the world of consumer electronics. That's why the Open section packs the latest news and trends into the first few pages of *CE Lifestyles*, along with the sparkle and bling that you can buy to accessorize your devices.

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Froogle (froogle.google.com)
- 20** **His & Hers CE**



A/V Club

Some of our favorite electronic gadgets are the ones that provide the sounds and pictures that move and entertain us and our friends and family. Whether you want to put together a wireless audio system for your home or just want help using the plasma TV in your living room, A/V Club can help.

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Creating The Perfect Movie Night



Digital Studio

Digital cameras and camcorders are changing the way we record the moments of our lives, from quick snapshots of favorite vacation spots to priceless video clips of first steps and other important milestones. Get to know your new digicam or camcorder and learn what to do with your photos and video once you have them.

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Be Creative While Trick-Or-Treating
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Take Pictures At Night



CE @Home

The consumer electronics in our homes are no longer limited to TVs and DVD players. Smart appliances, home automation, and whole-house audio systems are becoming more and more common and affordable for families, and with so much available, why check CE at the door?

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TracFone Prepaid Wireless Cell Phone

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Use CE On Your Daily Commute

CE Lite

Most CE devices are all about fun. Here, we'll tell you about the latest albums and films to catch, so you can make sure your entertainment is as up-to-date as your gear. Also, read what real women just like you are saying about how consumer electronics are affecting their everyday lives.

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Editor's Note

My husband and I recently had several of our friends and family members over for a relaxing evening of dinner and drinks. We started out with quite a crowd, and as the night wore on, our group became smaller and smaller until we had about a half-dozen people left at midnight, just hanging out on our deck.

The group was an eclectic one, and they didn't necessarily know each other very well, and in a few cases not at all, but fortunately good food and good wine make anyone chatty and friendly. Our conversation (as so many conversations do) turned to our jobs. In a roundabout way, we started talking about what I was working on at *CE Lifestyles*, and I brought out a few fun CE devices I had taken home to test out.

It turned out that those devices were more of an ice breaker than the best martinis I could ever make. They proved to be a common ground for everyone there, one where we could all share our opinions about what we like about the things that keep us informed and connected; one where we could help each other figure out how to use them; and one that let us share our experiences with the technology we so depend on. The cameras, MP3 player, and cell phone kept our guests partying longer than the Château Rieussec! Proof that these devices really do give us amazing (and fun!) ways to communicate and interact with the people we care most about.

Live well, friends.



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WHAT'S STOPPING YOU?

TOSHIBA LCD HDTV WITH BUILT-IN DVD PLAYER. THEY GOT THEIRS. WHAT'S STOPPING YOU?

* Unified remote control may not operate additional devices or all of their features, in which case it is suggested that you use the original remote for the applicable device.

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ce news

COMPILED BY RACHEL DEROWITSCH

Epson Unveils "Workstation On Wheels" For Scrapbookers

The new Epson Scrapbook Central (www.epson.com) may be coming to a retailer near you—provided store owners are willing to pay \$7,999 to make this "workstation on wheels" available to their customers.

This all-in-one scrapbooking center lets customers scan, edit, print, copy, and restore their photos and scrapbook pages by following the instructions on a touchscreen monitor. You can work with images stored on a flash memory card, CD, or DVD or bring in photos and create a CD at the workstation.

In addition to assisting scrapbookers, the Epson Scrapbook Central can help anyone who wants to make greeting cards and calendars.

The workstation includes a PC running Windows, a keyboard, an Epson Expression 10000XL large-format scanner, two Epson Stylus Photo printers, a 15-inch monitor, CD drive, and universal card reader. Together, these elements can produce images in many sizes, including a 12- x 12-inch borderless print.

The Epson Scrapbook Central is scheduled to debut in stores this month.



Garmin Introduces Petite Car Navigators

The new StreetPilot i2 and i3 GPS navigators from Garmin International (www.garmin.com) won't take up much room in your car. These baseball-sized navigators (2.74 x 3 x 2.15 inches [HxWxD]) offer audio directions that will steer you through each turn to your destination. And you can easily move the units, which mount to your dashboard via a suction cup, to another car.

Both the i2 (\$299) and i3 (\$399) come with a USB/PC cable, a 128MB TransFlash data card, and the MapSource City Select North America NT v7 DVD. This DVD holds mapping details for the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico.



Find TV & Radio Clips In A Blinkx

Blinkx, a Web-based search company, is now offering a free search-and-delivery service for broadband users looking for video and audio clips from television, radio, and podcasts. After you download and install the program from the Blinkx.tv site (www.blinkx.tv), enter your search criteria, and the SmartFeed service will hunt through dozens of content providers to return the most relevant clips to your desktop.

The beta version of SmartFeed, which debuted in July, lets you choose which sources you want to search. Some of these content providers include CNN, FOX News, NBC, C-SPAN, E! Entertainment, Reuters, and ESPN. SmartFeed is based on the RSS (Really Simple Syndication) technology.

The site also features a SearchSafe tool, which lets you block "unsuitable" material from the Web, and Smart Folders, which are self-updating folders you can store on your hard drive.

Downloads Get Legal

The IFPI (International Federation of Phonographic Industries; www.ifpi.org) reports that the download of legal music files from the Internet nearly tripled in the first half of 2005. About 180 million single music files were legally downloaded worldwide during January through June of this year, compared to 57 million in the first half of 2004.

Naturally, the growth of legitimate sources for downloading music has exploded, too. The IFPI counts more than 300 online sites now available from which you can legally download music, about three times as many sites as were available a year ago.

Longhorn? No, Vista

You knew a new version of the Windows operating system was coming. Now you know its name. Previously code-named "Longhorn," the new Windows OS, scheduled to hit the market sometime in the second half of 2006, has been titled Vista.

A beta version of Windows Vista was released in August. For more information about the new OS' tools and features as they become available, see www.microsoft.com/windowsvista.



Windows Vista™

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Wake and sleep to your iPod®?

iHome™, the home audio system for your iPod, puts a new spin on your tunes!

Keeping track of time takes on a whole new meaning when it's your time and your "tracks". Your iPod gets a home base with the iHome system — dock it, charge it, listen up or fade it out. iHome provides it all.

The iHome is a complete home audio system with digital AM/FM radio, gentle wake and sleep, and an easy-to-use alarm clock. Compatible with all docking iPods (3g, 4g, photo, mini), the removable inserts allow you to dock and charge your iPod directly from the base. Or, use the patch cord that comes with the iHome to connect with non-docking iPods, other mp3 players and audio devices such as CD players. The iHome's stereo capabilities include high-fidelity stereo drivers in specially designed Reson8™ speaker chambers which deliver astounding clarity, depth and power. You can even connect it to your own stereo system for more iPod playing options and control.

Start the day your way

The iHome gives you a personal, programmable alarm system that puts a new spin on being "in tune" every morning. Find the setting that works best for you with Wake to iPod and Sleep to iPod. You can wake up or fall asleep to your iPod tracks, AM/FM radio or a buzzer. Not one for rude awakenings? No problem. The Gradual Wake and Gradual Sleep features increase/decrease the alarm/sleep volumes to ease you into the day or night.

Reson8 Speaker Technology



The custom Strontium-Ferrite speakers offer increased sensitivity, producing clearer, crisper highs, richer, more responsive midrange and fuller, driving bass. Reson8 technology provides detailed, dynamic stereo sound that does justice to every track on your playlist, whether it's classical or rock.

iHome™
the home system for your iPod®



- Charges your iPod
- Wake and sleep to radio or your iPod
- Works with all docking iPods*

The extra-large, backlit custom LCD display is easy to read and the iHome even takes the hassle out of daylight savings with the auto-set clock feature. The radio includes a built-in automatic frequency control and PLL digital radio tuning for enhanced reception.

And you don't need to sacrifice style. The clean, contemporary design complements the look of your iPod as well as your home or office, giving you multiple capabilities in a single space.

Risk Free Trial

The iHome comes with a 30-day risk free trial. If, for any reason, you are not completely satisfied with your iHome, simply return it within 30 days for a full refund of your purchase price.

iHome • \$129.95

Includes Universal Rhino Aluminum case for your iPod and FREE S&H!

To order, call toll free 24 hours a day

1-800-755-9787

Source Code: 27002



NJ, MI, and TX residents only please add sales tax.

iPod not included.

*iPod shuffle must use line-in jack.

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www.ihomedirect.com



For any place in your home or office



Free Rhino case... a \$39.95 value!

Marketing That Motivates Moms

A survey conducted jointly by Lucid Marketing and Email Labs shows that moms are most likely to open a marketing email if the subject line contains the mention of either a discounted price (72.5% of respondents) or a free shipping offer (60.1%). Once they've opened the email, moms are more inclined to click through to the advertiser's Web site if the email displays a product's price (62.7%) or the product's photo (61.7%).

Even though the vast majority (78.6%) of the 695 moms surveyed say either they or their ISP runs an antispam filtering service, women are willing to sign up for retailers' email promotions and newsletters. Here's what motivates them to do so; results don't add up to 100% because respondents were encouraged to check all applicable answers:

Reason For Receiving Marketing Emails	Percent Of Respondents
To receive coupons or special discounts	86.6
To find out what is on sale	69.0
To learn about new products	42.0
To receive information relevant to me	41.0
To receive information on events	26.0
To learn about the company	6.3

Source: Lucid Marketing, Email Labs

Top-Selling Printer Brands

HP easily outdistances its closest competitors when it comes to printer sales, according to figures released for May 2005. Total sales of printers for that month exceeded \$295 million.

Brand	Market Share (percentage)
1. Hewlett-Packard	52.4
2. Lexmark	14.0
3. Epson	12.7
4. Canon	10.8
5. Kodak	3.6



Source: The NPD Group/NPD Techworld

tidbits

CE products are found in more American homes than are cars.

Source: Consumer Electronics Association

37.9 million high-speed Internet lines were in use by American homes and businesses in 2004, up 34% from the previous year.

Source: Federal Communications Commission

Nine out of 10 Web users report that they have changed their behavior while online and viewing email to avoid software intrusions such as spyware, adware, and viruses.

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project

Sales of mobile phones will surpass the 1 billion mark by 2009, and 2.6 billion mobile phones will be in use by the end of that year. In the future mobile phones might be the most common CE device worldwide.

Source: Gartner

More than half a billion songs have been purchased from the iTunes Music Store.

Source: Apple Computer

117 million adults in the United States have gone online to find health information. Of these, 57% have discussed the information they found online with their doctors.

Source: Harris Interactive

Only 11% of commuters surveyed approve the use of cell phones for voice calls on airplanes, though 64% favor their use for other purposes. Currently, both the FCC and the FAA have bans on using cell phones during flights.

Source: IDC



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takes you.

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is in your music.
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Rio®

portable audio players



www.rioaudio.com

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Ideally,
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come
together
in small
packages.

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compact,
useful, and
attractive
devices
that help
us control
the media
in our lives.



Logitech Wireless Headphones

\$149.99

www.logitech.com

Perfect for your iPod, Logitech's sleek wireless headphones let you and Tori Amos roam up to 30 feet without entanglements. The adapter connects to a standard headphone jack, and the 3.2-ounce headset fits around the back of your head. The ear cups even include built-in iPod controls on the side.

Belkin TuneCommand iPod Remote

\$49.99

www.belkin.com

You want to listen to music while painting the kitchen or working in the garden, but also want to keep your iPod safe in its charger or in your purse. Belkin's TuneCommand for iPod connects a small module to your 3rd or 4th generation, photo, or mini iPod, so you can control playback and listen via the remote unit (with headphone jacks) from 150 feet away.





Archos AV700

\$799.95 (100GB); \$599.95 (40GB)

www.archos.com

Catching up on "American Idol" while traveling has never been so easy. Archos' new portable video player includes a TV Dock, so you can capture programs with a single touch or schedule recordings when you won't be around. With the 7-inch widescreen LCD, you won't have any trouble telling your Rubens from your Kellys, and the 100GB version's 400-hour capacity won't force you to skimp on recordings. And for playing music or viewing photos, capacity to store 50,000 songs and 1 million images should be sufficient.

Samsung SC-D6550 Duocam

\$799.99

www.samsung.com

Whether you're trying to catch the winning goal or just snap team photos, this little camera will do the trick. Samsung's next generation dual-purpose camera doesn't do either video or stills halfway. Instead, it gives you two lenses, two sensors, and two ways to record. Capture high-quality digital video or flip the lens around and take 5MP (megapixel) still pictures.



Hauppauge WinTV-PVR-USB2

\$99

www.hauppauge.com

Want to save your favorite TV shows or home videos to your computer without investing time and money in complicated configuration and hardware? Check out the WinTV-PVR-USB2. Just connect the unit to a USB 2.0 port, hook up your TV or VCR connections, and record away.



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Treat yourself.

COMPILED BY SEAN DOOLITTLE

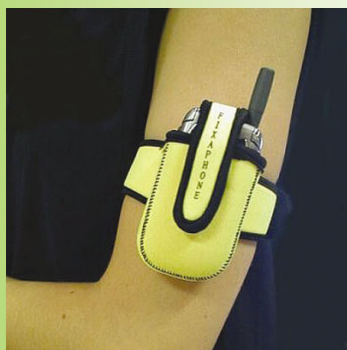


Arty iPod Covers

Price varies per design

(\$50 to \$70 average) • wrappers.typepad.com/arty

There's no shortage of stylish iPod cases out there, so why not make yours personal with a custom-stitched case from Arty? Email the U.K.-based company your choice of artwork, along with your hardware specs and your choice of case design; 20,000 to 30,000 stitches of Gutermann embroidery thread later, Arty'll send you a one-of-a-kind iPod sleeve that's you from first stitch to last.



Tgh Fixaphone Adjustable Velcro Cell Phone Holder

\$21.95 • www.amazon.com

Active lifestyle? No pockets? Here's your phone holster. It's fully adjustable, so you can wear it around your arm or leg. According to Tgh Accessories, Fixaphone "fits most cell phones and will hold some pagers, MP3 players, and two-way radios." Two sizes, small and large, are available via Amazon.com in blue, yellow, red, black, and hunter green.



Furgle Belly Case 24 CD Holder

\$9.99

www.homedepot.com

Impeccable style can be exhausting. Get into the Halloween spirit with one of these goofy little monsters that carry CDs or DVDs in their tummy. They're fuzzy; they hold 24 discs; and they'll only gobble up an Alexander Hamilton. All treat, no tricks, also available in pink and purple (two eyes, no horns, doesn't eat people).

GYMSPacific Poppy PCNB Tech Tote

\$40 • www.ebags.com

For quick jaunts to the coffee shop, this neoprene notebook sleeve gives a little padding and protection without the bulk of a full-sized case, but with plenty of snap. It accommodates most notebooks with screens up to 15 inches and is available in four colors: apple green (shown), milk grey, tangerine, and white.



Cool accessories.

Audiovox is always close to her heart. She loves her Audiovox MP3 Player with FM tuner. Her well-rounded DVD Player with built-in video games. And the big, blue display of her XM Satellite Radio with FM modulator is always nearby. Accessorize your life with Audiovox. Go to www.audiovox.com or call 1-800-645-4994.



MP3 Player



DVD Player



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RADIO



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Shopping Site Of The Month

Froogle

froogle.google.com

W

Whether you're a hard-core shopper or a casual buyer, you likely have one thing in common with fellow shoppers: You all like a good deal. And while you have probably learned to hone your bargain-hunting skills in the local mall, online shopping is a whole new ball game. In order for you to be a more effective shopper, search engine giant Google (www.google.com) has stepped up to the plate with Froogle, designed specifically for product searches. (At press time, Froogle was still in **beta** version, which means it is being tested and improvements are being made.)

As you have probably figured out, Froogle is a combination of the words frugal and Google. Although not everything you find through Froogle will fit into every budget, it is a handy tool to help you find the best price on whatever strikes your fancy.

Much like Google, the Froogle home page is simple and self-explanatory. Simply enter what you're looking for in the search field and click Search Froogle. To make things even easier, Froogle offers an Advanced Froogle Search. Using this feature, you can tailor your search by selecting a price range, choosing a product category, excluding words from your search, or specifying in what location you want Froogle to search for the word (in the product name or description, only in the name, or only in the description).

Set Up A Shopping List


You can keep track of all those great items you find by using the Froogle Shopping List. On the home page, click the My Shopping List link in the top-right corner. All you need to do to get started is sign up for a Google account using your email address. Once you verify your email

address by clicking the link sent to you, you're ready to begin.

To add an item to your Shopping List, click the Add To List link, which is under the product's name if you are in List view. Items with several listings (such as a skirt available in various colors) provide a link to compare styles or prices. In Grid view, you need to click this Compare link before you can add an item to your list.

Although your entire Shopping List is private and accessible only after you log in, anyone can view certain items from your

Shopping List by entering your email address in the Find A Friend's Wish List field on the My Shopping List login page. The only items that appear to others are ones you choose by selecting the In Wish List checkbox below the items in your Shopping List.

We like the Wish List feature for not-so-subtle hints for birthdays and holidays. Just think: Your significant other will never again have an excuse for buying you power tools for your anniversary. 

BY JOY MARTIN



The Magic Behind The Site

Froogle is a site for finding products. But how does Froogle know to only display items that you can buy? The secret is the technology behind its sister site, Google. According to Froogle's FAQs (click Froogle Help on the Froogle home page), the **spidering** software (software that can search the Internet for very specific information and sort the results) used by Google finds Web sites that sell products. These sites, along with sites submitted by retailers, are then used as the basis for your search. Froogle does not charge for companies to be added to its database of sites, and advertisers don't get better placement on search results pages just because they advertise on the site. All paid advertisements are clearly marked as Sponsored Links on the right of the search results page. ●

More Audio. More Video.



In More Rooms.

Today's homes have more audio and video choices than ever before. CD, XM® Satellite Radio, MP3, Hi-Def TV, DVD, DSS, VCR, Security Cameras, and more. For many homeowners, this can be overwhelming. With the new ELAN System12, all of these things come together in one seamless, easy-to-use system.

One touch on an ELAN VIA!® Panel or Keypad puts everything at your fingertips. Enjoy the same or different audio in every room – at the same time. Get video from your VCR and DVD players onto every TV in the home.

How about watching the kids in the pool from the kitchen?

Do all of this – and more – with System12. Easy, convenient, and just more fun. Now, enjoy more video and sound all around.

Hear Sound All Around

Watch Hi-Def in the Bedroom

Monitor the Pool Area



**Do More
with System12.**

Life Just Got Better™



TOUCH



LISTEN



RELAX



WATCH



TALK

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His . . .

Each month, Vince Cogley and Trista Kunce, both staff members at Sandhills Publishing, share their thoughts about a device or two of their choice. They may not reach common ground on living room décor, but they both agree that CE helps them live well, just sometimes in different ways.



Just for a moment, let's set aside the weighty debates of the day. Why don't we shelve our discussions over White House information leaks and put aside disagreements about our defense policy? Even Yankees and Red Sox fans should be able to agree on one thing.

When it comes to digital music, hard drive-based players are the way to go.

My XX counterpart Trista would have you believe that a diminutive flash memory digital music player, such as the oh-so-cute Creative MuVo TX FM, is superior to "bulky" players, such as an Apple iPod or Dell DJ, which use a mini hard drive.

As far as size is concerned, I remember when enjoying portable music meant lugging around a ghetto blaster the size of a Honda Civic's trunk. Simply picking one up took care of my upper body workout for a day. Is the Dell DJ 20 bigger than the Creative MuVo TX FM? Of course. Is it ghetto blaster big? Hardly. I want a digital music player that fits in my pocket, not one that vanishes in it.

The MuVo TX FM's 1GB will store a lot of music, but the DJ 20 stores more—a lot more. Because my music collection includes a rogue's gallery of crooners, ranging from Anna Nalick to The White Stripes, I need a music player that caters to my eclectic tastes without forcing me to sacrifice the quality of my MP3s. With 1GB, I can store about a shelf of my CDs; with 20GB, there's room for the entire library.

When one of my friends brought his iPod along on a recent road trip to Chicago, all of that space saved the day. With a Suburban full of eight guys, finding music everyone could agree on was a lot easier when we tapped into the vast collection of music you simply can't cram into a flash-based player.

I'll admit that a smaller, flash-based player is ideal for athletic audiophiles. Although I didn't experience any skipping when I took the DJ 20 along with me on a 30-minute treadmill excursion, an armband for future workouts would be helpful.

Finally, as someone who prefers his own tunes to the nerve-wracking white noise of the office Muzak, I find myself using my digital music player for several hours every day. Because I can recharge its battery, I save a small fortune every month on the AA or AAA batteries I would have to burn through with a flash-based player.

When I want thousands of songs at my disposal, having a 20GB (or larger) hard drive is music to my ears. **CE**

BY VINCE COGLEY

Dell DJ 20 (20GB; \$249; www.dell.com)





& Hers CE

As the old adage goes, I like all things great and small. I have a large yellow lab, Lucky, who likes to drag me around on our nightly runs. I also like small things, such as my modest CD collection. But when I started looking for an MP3 player that would survive my runs and fit in my purse, size mattered.


The first MP3 player I checked out was Vince's Dell DJ 20. It is attractive, with a brushed-metal body and a large LCD for easy navigation, but I wasn't sure if I wanted a player as big as an iPod or needed one with all that hard drive space.

In only about 20 minutes of using the DJ, I found out that my lifestyle is more conducive to a flash drive-based MP3 player: After a bumpy run with Lucky pulling and jostling me around the neighborhood, the hard drive on the DJ locked up. Besides, the DJ 20 (4 x 2.5 x 0.74 inches [HxWxD]; 6.8 ounces without the battery) was cumbersome to hold while running and working out at the gym or even just to carry in my purse. You can get an armband for the DJ 20, but you would have to buy a player for each arm so that you don't bulk up just one bicep.

The DJ 20 is nice to show off at the office, but I needed something practical. I found the Creative MuVo TX FM player, which is tiny compared to the DJ: It's 2.9 x 1.4 x 0.6 inches and weighs about 1.1 ounces without the battery.

I can take the MuVo on my run and everywhere else because it fits so easily in my cluttered purse. It has no moving parts (it has a skip-free flash drive), so it is immune to the shocks of a 5K run, even with a clumsy lab in the lead. Also, I don't worry about having enough music to listen to during my workout because, even with the MuVo's limited 1GB capacity (compared to the DJ's 20GB hard drive), there is plenty of storage space for my favorite songs. Plus, the MuVo plugs into my PC's USB port, making it easy to add and delete songs, whereas the DJ 20's bulky cords made transferring music downright difficult at times.

After working out, I like to check out the latest news updates on NPR, which I can do with the MuVo's FM radio (not a feature with the DJ). The MuVo also has a voice recorder that I have used more often than I expected for recording happenings such as important office meetings and my niece's first words.

I feel my niece described the MuVo best when she whispered "hot" into its microphone. The MuVo's features and functions *are* hot. The device itself is not as much of a beauty queen as the DJ with its large LCD and flashy body, but it's an ideal player for a woman on the go. 

Creative MuVo TX FM (1GB; \$149.99; www.creative.com)



BY TRISTA KUNCE



Home Networking For Everyday Families


Make Wireless Work For You

The hype surrounding home networks has grown more extreme with each new networking product introduced to the market. The basic idea of connecting home computers to allow them to share an Internet connection seems sensible to most people, but as companies have pushed more and more wireless devices toward the shopping carts of consumers, the goal of home networking has become less clear. If you've been caught in the total connectivity whirlwind, you might be wondering, "Should I make sure I can network my coffee maker? If so, do I need a firewall for it?"

Of course, home networks exist to make the technology you have more powerful and convenient, not more complicated and expensive, as it seems to be at times. In some cases, an old-fashioned method for using your devices, such as putting a boom box in each room instead of networking speakers, will still be the most logical choice. But beneath the confusion of the home networking rush is a kernel of truth that may make you consider wireless instead of the more traditional options: Devices that share information can be smarter and serve you better.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in home entertainment. So much of the content we enjoy, from

music to movies to snapshots taken with a digital camera, ends up stored on a computer. This is great, except that our homes generally aren't set up to have a group of people relaxing around the computer to enjoy everything that is stored on it. Many people still listen to music on a stereo, and we usually gather around a television to watch movies or TV shows. Connecting our computers to these sources lets us enjoy new digital content in the same familiar way that we are used to experiencing our favorite media content.

In the following pages, we will run through a few examples of how you can use home networking to make the technology you already have more powerful and convenient. At the base of all of these examples is a broadband Internet connection, usually via a DSL or cable modem, and a router. You can think of a router as the post office through which all messages, either to other devices or to the Internet, pass. A wired router uses Ethernet cables to link devices, while a wireless router uses radio signals. Most wireless routers also have a few wired ports, so they are the most popular choice; expect to spend between \$50 and \$140 for one of these. The D-Link DI-524 (\$49; www.dlink.com) is a good example of a typical unit. Once you have a base network set up, the way you use it will depend on what devices you choose to connect. 

BY JOSEPH S. BELL



Networks For Computers On The Go

SCENARIO



Erin and her husband, Ben, have a wireless network setup that lets them play audio

and video from either of their laptops on the home theater system. And Erin has configured her computer to share its printer on the network; if the kids need to print homework from their computers, they can transmit it over the network to her computer, which passes it to the printer. However, when Erin goes out of town, the system breaks down. If the kids want to print, their link to the printer is gone! And when Ben wants to watch a movie that is stored on Erin's hard drive, he's out of luck. The family can't depend on laptops to perform duties on the network.

SOLUTION

Erin and Ben need a small network appliance that lets them share their printer and store files in a central location where everyone can access them. The file storage issue can be resolved with network-attached storage. Not too long ago, large companies were the only organizations that used network storage, but the idea has proven useful to small businesses and families, as well. The idea is simple: Network storage is basically a hard drive that plugs directly into your network, with no computer required. Store music, movies, and pictures on the network drive that you would like to be available for sharing, and they will remain stored there even if other computers on the network have been removed or turned off. These storage devices also provide an excellent way to back up your data in case of a system crash.

A network print server performs the same task for your printer, acting as a bridge between the network and your printer's USB port. By connecting your printer to a network print server instead of a computer on your network, you can ensure that it's always available.

PRODUCTS & COST

Network storage prices typically vary with size. While LaCie's Ethernet Disk mini 250GB network hard drive costs \$279 (www.lacie.com), you can find smaller hard drives for less, but these drives are usually wired. If you need to keep your drive away from your router, consider D-Link's DSM-624H 40GB Wireless G Central Home

Drive (\$429). If you're looking for an integrated print server and storage device, check out the Buffalo LinkStation Network Storage Center (\$219.99; [\[tech.com\]\(http://tech.com\)\), which provides 120GB of storage and a USB printer connection.](http://www.buffalo</p>
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USB print servers are available that connect to both wireless and wired networks. For example, D-Link's DP-G310 (\$89) is wireless, but its DP-301U (\$65) requires an Ethernet connection. If you're shopping for a router, too, remember that some routers include a built-in print server, which could save you configuration trouble. Check with the printer and print server manufacturers to make sure that they're compatible.

DIFFICULTY

More difficult; a teenager's assistance may be required.



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Get Digital Music Out Of The Box

SCENARIO



Karen loves listening to MP3s. New audio technology lets her take her music wherever

she goes on her iPod, download new songs from the Web, and transfer songs from her CDs to her computer so she doesn't have to hunt for a CD her husband might have taken out to his car on permanent loan. However, when she's home, the only place she can listen to her music is at the computer. Her computer speakers aren't that great, and she would prefer to listen to songs on her stereo as she works in the kitchen. The obvious solution would be connecting her computer to her stereo, but the computer is in the next room.

SOLUTION

Karen should use a wireless network to transmit music from her computer to the kitchen stereo. This kind of network comes in two flavors. The first uses a transmitter and a receiver. The transmitter digitizes the signal from your audio device's analog audio output and then sends it via a digital radio signal to the receiver, which converts the signal back to analog for your stereo. This works well if you don't already have a wireless network.

The second kind of receiver uses your existing wireless network, so you don't need a transmitter at your computer. Instead, you configure your computer's audio program, perhaps Apple iTunes, to send audio to a wireless receiver hooked to your stereo. There are two advantages here: You don't need an additional transmitter—your computer's wireless network card sends the audio—and several wireless-enabled computers can send music to the stereo. Karen's son can stream music to the kitchen from his computer, and by putting another receiver at the living room stereo, Karen can stream music there, too.

PRODUCTS & COST

If you don't already have a wireless network and only wish to send audio from one place to one other, the least expensive option is to get a transmitter and receiver pair. D-Link's DSM-910BT Stereo Adapter Kit (\$135) is a good example of such a system and includes the most common audio cables you'll need to attach the devices to your stereo.

If you already have a wireless network or want to set one up, Apple's AirPort Express (\$129; www.apple.com) will provide music to your stereo by working with your existing network, or by creating its own. The system works fine with PCs, but you must use Apple iTunes software. Remember, although

the AirPort costs a bit less than D-Link's devices, if you're setting up a network for the first time, you'll need to ensure that each computer

has a wireless adapter, which each cost between \$40 and \$100.

DIFFICULTY

Easy; let Grandma do it.



Make Your Remote, Not Your Mouse, Your Clicker

SCENARIO



Martha likes to play digital music from her computer and often downloads movies from the Web. She also has a digital camera and likes to organize her snapshots into slideshows to share with friends and relatives. But crowding around the computer to watch them is always uncomfortable. She has thought about linking the home theater to the computer's video outputs, but the idea of running into the home office to pause a movie always made her feel like it wasn't worth it.

SOLUTION

Martha should use a digital media center device to connect her computer to her home theater. These let you transmit video and audio to your TV over a standard wireless network, but they also let you control and browse the content on your TV through a menu system by using your remote control. Martha can pause her slideshow to tell a story and then switch to a home movie stored on her computer without leaving the couch. In some cases, the devices find content on your computer automatically, such as a menu of the MP3 files you have stored on all your networked computers.

DIFFICULTY

Moderate; you may need to read the instructions a few times.



PRODUCTS & COST

First, you'll need a fast 802.11g wireless network. Upgrading your router to this new standard could cost \$100, with another \$40 to \$100 to update the wireless adapter for each computer.

Though they require fast networks, wireless media centers are not all alike. Choose based on the features it offers. For example, Buffalo's PC-P3LWG/DVD LinkTheater (\$349.99) has an integrated DVD player and is HDTV-compatible. Linksys offers the WMCE54AG Dual-Band Wireless A/G Media Center Extender (\$299; www.linksys.com), which can record and pause live TV, but it's only compatible with Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005 computers. D-Link's DSM-320RD (\$269) features an integrated memory card reader, so you can view your pictures directly from the camera's digital film.



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Kids & Technology

Part One: TVs & DVD Players

So your kid wants a TV in his bedroom. His reasoning? All his friends have one.

You know better than to buy that old exaggerated line, right? Well, Mom, your child is closer to the truth than you realize.

According to Dr. David Walsh, founder and president of the National Institute on Media and the Family (www.mediafamily.org), 53% of children and 65% of teens in America have a TV in their bedroom. The institute has found that kids with televisions in their bedrooms watch about 5.5 hours of programming more each week than those who don't.

That leaves you with a tough decision. For a host of reasons, it may be right to make your child's wishes come true. Then again, many studies show potential downsides to letting your kids bunk with their own "idiot box."

Then there's the matter of finding the right model, should you decide to buy a TV.

We'll help you navigate this tricky terrain by equipping you with information on which to base your decisions. We will also help you establish some rules you and your children can abide by to make the situation fair for both of you.

Issues To Consider

Before buying a TV for your child's room, consider the potential effects a TV in the bedroom may have on your child's school work, sleep habits, and health. Based on the data we found, we're guessing most researchers won't take your child's side on this issue. However, they can't account for all the influencing factors in a home, the most important of which is you.

Academics. Studies published in the July 4 issue of the *Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine* indicate that the presence of a TV in a child's bedroom could have a negative effect on his grades.

In one of those studies, researchers at Stanford University and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health tracked nearly 350 third grade students from six elementary schools in northern California during the 1999 to 2000 school year. The kids and their parents reported on the types of media in their homes (TVs, computers, videos, and video games) and how often they used them. Then, the kids were tested twice using the Stanford Achievement Test.

The students with TVs in their bedrooms scored about eight points lower on math and language arts tests and seven points lower on the reading test. On the other hand, children with a computer in their home (not necessarily in their bedroom) scored about six points higher on math and language arts and four points higher on the reading test.

Sleep. More than two-thirds of America's children ages 10 and younger experience weekly sleep problems, according to the results of the 2004 Sleep in America survey sponsored by the National Sleep Foundation (www.sleepfoundation.org).

School-aged children (43%) are the most likely to have a TV in their bedroom, but even one out of five infants and toddlers have a television in their nursery. Youngsters with a bedroom TV set are more likely to get less sleep and go to bed later than those without. On average, they lose about 20 minutes of sleep each day—more than two hours a week—compared to children without a TV in the bedroom.

Obesity. We are getting taller—and, unfortunately, much heavier. That's the bad news from the National Center for Health Statistics (www.cdc.gov/nchs), specifically from its National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, as reported in the April 19 edition of *Circulation*, a publication of the American Heart Association. Though American adults are on average an inch taller than their 1960 counterparts, they are also about 25 pounds heavier.

Most disconcerting are the findings regarding children's health. For instance, a 10-year-old boy in 1963 weighed 74.2 pounds, almost 11 pounds lighter than a typical 10-year-old boy in 2002. Granted, today's kids are slightly taller than those from years ago, but their extra weight is not proportional to their added height.

Also in that edition of *Circulation*, Drs. Robert H. Eckel, Stephen R. Daniels, Alice K. Jacobs, and Rose Marie Robertson wrote that "overweight and obesity are increasing worldwide, ultimately challenging malnutrition as the No. 1 cause of nutrition-related morbidity and mortality." They stress that a

"lack of physical activity" among children is a "critical issue."

The connection to TV is obvious: When kids are watching television, they aren't exercising. TV can't be a substitute for the exercise or play time that children need. Thus, the American Academy of Pediatrics' Web site (www.aap.org/obesity) recommends allowing children to watch no more than two hours of television viewing a day.

You Deserve It

Although the above research gives you plenty of reasons to be cautious about putting a TV or DVD player in your kids' bedroom(s), the fact is that those researchers don't know your kids, and they don't know your home life. You may have good reasons for letting them have a TV, provided that you make and enforce rules for their TV viewing. (See "The Rules" sidebar for suggestions.) And some of these reasons may, in fact, benefit you just as much as your kids.

THE RULES

CLIP AND USE THESE GUIDELINES TO HELP YOUR CHILDREN EARN THE RIGHT TO WATCH TV.

- 1 Is your homework done?
- 2 Have you exercised today?
- 3 Are your chores (picking up the bedroom, walking the dog, etc.) done?
- 4 Have you read/been read to for fun today?
- 5 Have you watched more than your daily allotment of TV already?

AGE APPROPRIATE

These featured products will help you find a TV or DVD player with your child's age and interests in mind.

TVs & DVDs

PRESCHOOL



Hello Kitty 13-inch Color TV With Remote Control

Little girls love this friendly feline, but your older girls may like this bright-pink model, as well. A 13-inch combo TV/DVD unit (\$264.99) is available, too.

www.sanrio.com • \$199.99

Classic Mickey & Disney Princess Color TVs

Mickey Mouse- and princess-themed TVs also come in 19-inch screen sizes (\$169.99). Plus, Disney Direct sells similarly themed 3.5-inch portable DVD players (\$139.99) and combo DVD/VCR units (\$149.99). A VCR works well for preschoolers, who have an easier time handling videos than delicate DVDs.



www.disneydirect.com • \$109.99

PRIMARY



SpongeBob SquarePants Emerson 13-inch Color TV With Remote Control

The world's most talkative sea-dweller has his own line of CE products. A 13-inch combo TV/DVD (\$179.99) is also available.

www.nickjr.com • \$119.99

Hannspree Lifestyle TVs: Fantasy Collection

These LCD TVs take the shape of almost everything from a red teddy bear to a helicopter. With the Sports and Style collections, there are more than 100 choices.

These TVs should be available on Hannspree's Web site in October.



www.hannspree.com • \$449.99 and up

TWEENS

Hannspree Lifestyle TVs: Sports Collection

Hannspree has licensing agreements with MLB and the NBA to market team-themed TVs. Other models in this collection are based on soccer, mountain biking, diving, and other outdoor sports.

www.hannspree.com • \$449.99 and up



Samsung DVD-L25 Hand Held Mini DVD Player

Kids can watch mini-DVDs on a 2.5-inch screen, plus enjoy MP3 and WMA (Windows Media Audio) files on this lightweight model. The battery gives up to 2.5 hours of playback.

www.samsung.com • \$129.99



Disney Flower 3.5-inch Portable DVD Player

Tween girls will especially enjoy this DVD player with a 3.5-inch screen. It includes built-in speakers but can accommodate headphones, too.

www.disneydirect.com • \$139.99



TEENS

Toshiba MD13P1 13-inch TV/DVD Combo

This model has a built-in sleep timer, plays some CDs, and can display JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group) images, too.

www.toshiba.com • \$169.99



Sony 13-inch FD Trinitron WEGA TV

If you prefer to keep DVDs out of your teen's room, this flat-screen standalone TV delivers quality at a reasonable price. It features side speakers and stereo sound.

www.sonystyle.com • \$179.99



Avoid conflict. Family movie nights when everyone gathers 'round the TV are great for kids of all ages. But there are times when you and/or your spouse may want to watch one thing, and your kids want to watch another. Sure, you can record broadcasts, but when two live events conflict or your schedule just doesn't allow you to watch recorded content later, having a second TV for the kids will make everyone happier.

Keep it quiet. OK, so we know we shouldn't use the TV as a baby-sitter, but the fact is, we do. Provided the content is trustworthy, it's far better to have your kids watching TV under your roof than to have them somewhere else doing who knows what. This is especially true for moms who work from home and for every mom who runs out of activity ideas on dreary rainy and wintry days.

Let them learn. Little ones can learn a lot from TV, especially educational shows. Programs such as "Blue's Clues," "Dora the Explorer," "Sesame Street," "Cyberchase," and "Zoom" teach and entertain at the same time. But older kids also can learn from programming found on such networks as The History Channel, Discovery, Food Network, and HGTV. And there's no end to the number of educational DVDs and videos you can buy or borrow from a public library.

What To Look For

If you decide that a TV is OK for your child's room, you can shop for appropriate and affordable models. Should you buy just a TV or perhaps a TV/DVD combo? Or maybe a portable DVD player would work best because that gives you more control of what they watch.

A number of good products are on the market that may appeal to your children and your checkbook. As you look

for the right television, don't overlook these factors:


Space. The coolest TV won't work unless you have the proper space for it. Make sure it's small enough to sit on a stable base within close reach of an outlet. (The fewer electrical cords you need, the better, especially in rooms of younger children.) Position it so your kids can view it in a comfortable position, not too close to the set.

Cable connection. On a related note, is your child's room cable-ready? A pre-existing cable hookup may determine where you will have to place the TV. If the room isn't cable-ready and you would like it to be, be prepared to pay for that expense, as well.

The V-Chip. Per FCC rules, all 13-inch and larger TVs made since Jan. 1, 2000, must have V-Chip technology, which enables you to block programming based on its content. Make sure the set you buy comes equipped with this technology and learn how to use it. A Kaiser Family Foundation (www.kff.org) survey of 8- to 18-year-olds found that only 6% of those kids say their parents use the V-Chip to block unsuitable programming. For more information about program content, read the TV Parental Guidelines on the FCC Web site (www.fcc.gov/vchip).

Parental Guidance Suggested

If you had to choose between buying a computer or a TV for your child, the experts would recommend a computer. But even that comes with its own set of potential pitfalls.

Regardless of how plugged in your children are, their best input comes from you. So stay involved with what they watch on TV—no matter what room in the house that is. 

BY RACHEL DEROWITSCH

The Teen Years

According to the study "Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-olds," more than half (53%) of tweens and teens say that their parents have no rules for them concerning how much TV they watch or what they watch on TV. As important as parental rules are, they are even more crucial for teens who have private access to TVs and/or movies in their bedrooms. Here are a few you should consider if you have your own teenage child.

- **Set a time limit.** Not only will a limit on TV viewing give your teens more time for school work, sleep, exercise, extra-curricular activities, and perhaps a part-time job, it will help them learn to make good choices.
- **Monitor content.** Familiarize yourself with V-Chip technology and the TV Parental Guidelines. Let your teens know what's acceptable and what's not, and make sure they know you'll be checking in on them.
- **Set a bedtime.** Lights out includes the glow of a TV set, which shouldn't be on past bedtime—even if Janey hasn't watched her daily allotment yet. Do everything you can to help your teens get the recommended amount of sleep: at least 8.5 hours per night.
- **Dangle the carrot.** As Dr. Cliff Huxtable once warned Theo on "The Cosby Show," "I brought you into this world, and I can take you out." The same is true with your teens' TV. If they don't abide by your rules, you can take the TV out of their room.

tips

Creating The Perfect Movie Night

1

Location, Location, Location

A home movie night should get you up close and personal with your TV. Unlike theater seats, you won't have someone's head blocking your view. Make sure your A/V equipment is front and center and arrange furniture so every viewer's shoulders are square with the screen, ensuring no one has to angle herself uncomfortably to see. Also, comfort is important, but too much comfort could have you snoozing before the opening credits. For this reason, sitting upright, as you would in a theater, is usually best. If you're willing to invest the money, you can buy theater-style seats, which come complete with padded armrests and cup holders.

2

Lights Out

Remember, when your surroundings are well lit and in focus, so are your palm pilot, cell phone, to-do list, and treadmill. In contrast, a darkened room helps you become better absorbed in the story, tuning out life's chaos for a moment and keeping your attention on the featured attraction. Hang up heavy drapes or "black-out" blinds for all windows in the room. For added special effect, buy a remote-controlled dimmer switch for your ceiling lights.

3

Friends

You probably won't miss the crowds of the public theater, but inviting several friends over can intensify your movie-watching experience. Besides, after spending ample time and money on your home theater system, you shouldn't keep it to yourself! Comedies and thrillers are movies best enjoyed with company. Having friends to share in the laughs can heighten the humor and add punch to the punch lines. If you're viewing a horror flick, having a nearby arm to clutch is always a good thing. No matter how top-notch your audio system is, it can't beat the sound effects of watching a scary movie amidst a chorus of screams. It's also fun to discuss the movies with your friends the next day via email.

4

Host A Theme Night

Bring the theme traditions of the old box office days to your family room. Feature a classic movie for your friends or children's friends and invite them to come dressed as their favorite characters. Use your digital camera to snap pictures of the costumes and make sure to share the photos afterward. Or, consider having pals over for a double-feature night. Select two movies to fit a particular theme, pairing them by either genre: "Grease" with "American Graffiti"; sequel: "Grease" with "Grease II"; a featured actor: "Grease" with "Saturday Night Fever"; or an original movie with its remake: "An Affair to Remember" with "Love Affair."

5

Snacks

What's a movie without popcorn? Even without a theater-style popcorn maker, you can offer some authenticity by serving your favorite microwave popcorn from the traditional bags, cardboard tubs, or boxes—often available in party supply stores. Once you've covered salty, make sure you cover sweet. Indulge yourself and pick up jumbo-sized boxes of your favorite traditional theater candies, such as Dots, Hot Tamales, Junior Mints, or Milk Duds, to enjoy with the show. Feeling especially nostalgic? Mix the candy with your popcorn and munch in ultimate kid fashion. Just make sure to carefully wash your hands of any goo and grease before you handle your home theater system or DVDs.



BY ANGIE ZMARZLY

ARTCOUSTIC™



Speakers featured:
• DF65-50 left & right w/ Getty art screens
• DF-Multi L+C+R center w/ ivory fabric

Because the way your environment *looks* is often more important than the way it *sounds*, music and movie lovers often sacrifice performance for aesthetics.

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With A New Digital
Camcorder

If you don't own a camcorder or are still using an older analog camcorder, there's never been a better time to go digital. Digital camcorders are available in nearly every price range with plenty of features and media options to choose from. Whatever your lifestyle, whatever your needs, there's sure to be one for you. That said, there's a lot out there to make your head spin if you don't know what you're looking for.

Although analog camcorders are still available, digital is taking over the market and with good reason. Digital camcorders give you better video that maintains its quality. By allowing you to stream video directly from camcorder to computer, digital video also makes editing your own movies a snap, with the right software. And because recording media have shrunk, digital camcorders are more compact than their analog counterparts.

As with any major purchase, you should brainstorm about what you want in a camcorder before going shopping. Do you just want to get family gatherings on DVD? Or are you a serious videographer who's going to want to do fancy editing? Will you be good about uploading your video to your computer? Or will you keep a shoebox of video to deal with later?

Where To Begin

Putting all of the possible features aside, perhaps the biggest decision you'll have to make is what type of recording medium you want your new camcorder to use.

While MiniDV is the standard, there are many others to choose from, including Digital8, MICROMV, DVD, and hard drives, and each has its pros and cons.

MiniDV. The most common digital format, MiniDV offers all of the benefits of digital recording without many hassles. MiniDV tapes look a bit like small VHS tapes but deliver digital quality, including digital audio (PCM stereo; pulse code modulation) that records CD-quality sound. Recording times range from 30 minutes to two hours, depending on the length of tape and camcorder setting. To make editing easier, some MiniDV tapes offer MIC (memory in cassette), which is a small chip that records data such as the date, time, and indexing information.

Digital8. Digital8 camcorders (exclusive to Sony) can use Hi8 or 8mm tapes, which are slightly larger than MiniDV tapes but cost less. Because some analog camcorders also used 8mm tapes, you may be able to use your new digital camcorder to play back your old tapes and even transfer them to digital format. (Not all models offer this feature.) Because Digital8 camcorders run the tape through the camcorder faster than analog camcorders, each tape can only hold half as much as labeled. For example, a 120-minute Hi8 tape will hold 60 minutes of Digital8 video.

MICROMV. The smallest of the tape-based recording media, MICROMV is also exclusive to Sony. A MICROMV tape will hold up to one hour of video and contains a 64Kb memory chip to store date, time, and indexing information. The camcorders use MPEG-2 compression and

not standard DV (digital video) compression such as MiniDV and Digital8. At press time, the DCR-IP1 Handycam (\$1,199.99; www.sonymstyle.com) was the only MICROMV camcorder available on Sony's Web site.

DVD. If you prefer not to bother with video editing on your computer, a camcorder that uses Mini DVDs may be right for you. The disc you choose will depend on your playback method. You can record only once to a mini DVD-R, but after finalizing the disc, you can play it back on most DVD players. If you want to reuse your discs, use Mini DVD-RWs



digital camcorders

(rewriteables), which you can use multiple times and play back on most DVD players. And with DVD-RAMs, you can use the disc multiple times, but they are not compatible with many DVD players. With any of the Mini DVD formats, you will get about 30 minutes of recording time per disc on a standard setting (60 minutes with long play). One perk of Mini DVD camcorders is that some let you edit

right on the camcorder before finalization, without the need for a computer.

Hard drive. Some camcorders do away with recordable media altogether by utilizing a hard drive. These camcorders vary a great deal in recording capacity. Some newer versions (such as the JVC Everio series; www.jvc.com) have up to a 30GB hard drive, which can hold seven hours of video using the highest quality setting and 37 hours on the lowest setting. The drawback, of course, is not having spare media handy just in case. If

you tend to procrastinate when it comes to uploading video to your computer for editing, you may want to consider that in your purchase decision.

Options


Sometimes it comes down to the little things. So, before handing over your money for what you think may be the perfect camcorder, pick it up and test it. Check out the placement of the controls and their accessibility. Some smaller camcorders may be difficult for a man with large fingers to control, for



example. And while it's easy to read about features, figuring out how to use them is a different story, so you should make sure you'll be able to use what you're paying for. Style is another factor to consider. In addition to the traditional camcorder shape, there are many vertical camcorders on the market that

you hold like a coffee cup, and not everyone will find this grip comfortable. Bottom line: It's important to make sure the right camcorder on paper is the right camcorder in real life.

All that taken into consideration, with the wide range of digital camcorders

on the market, there's bound to be one to meet your needs and probably most of your wants, too. And if you know what's out there and what you want, finding the perfect fit will be that much easier. 

BY JOY MARTIN

Must Haves

Now that you have the digital camcorder, you'll need to think about the "extras" that will make it even more fun, and more practical, to use. Here are some we think you should consider:

External light. Camcorders don't always like low-light settings. Avoid problems by investing in an external light to brighten any situation.

External microphone. Be sure to capture your subject's every word with an external zoom mic. You didn't film the guy sitting next to you. Why listen to him?

Tripod. Holding a camcorder for an extended period of time—no matter how small—can be tough on the arm. Invest in a tripod and never sacrifice blood flow for video again. (Viewers will thank you for the steady picture, too.)

Extra battery. Never miss a moment by having a spare, fully charged battery ready to go.

Spare media. Although some forms of media hold more than others, it never hurts to have extra with you.

Software. If you want to take your home movies to the next level, invest in a software program that helps you create all of the "extras" without the headache. (See the "Top Video-Editing Software" sidebar on page 47 for our top picks.) ●

A Few Possibilities

There are dozens of digital camcorders on the market, and here are three we liked and the reasons we did.

JVC GZ-MC100

\$1,199 • www.jvc.com



The GZ-MC100 Vertical Style Digital Media Camera is small enough to go anywhere. And no need for discs and tapes: It uses a 4GB Microdrive card that can hold 60 minutes of MPEG-2 video. Big hands might find the small controls tricky to operate, but the go-anywhere capability might just be worth it.

Canon Elura 90

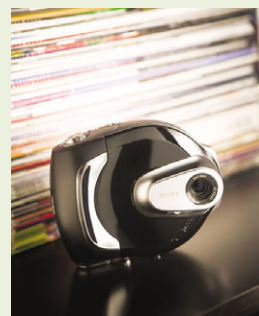
\$799 • www.usa.canon.com



The compact Elura 90 is a MiniDV camcorder with all the options. By using the high-resolution 16:9 Wide-Screen Mode, you can even capture video to play back on a widescreen TV without image distortion. You can also connect the Elura 90 to your VCR and transfer analog tapes to digital with the Analog/Digital Converter, making it easy to update your old movies.

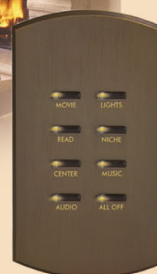
Sony DCR-DVD7

\$699.99 • www.sonymstyle.com



The DCR-DVD7 Handycam's unusual style will turn heads, and it offers the convenience of recording straight to DVD. Instead of traditional controls, the DVD7's 2.5-inch hybrid LCD doubles as a touchscreen. When you record on DVD-RWs in VR (video recording) mode, you can delete and divide scenes and even create a playlist with no need for a computer. After you're done, connect the camcorder directly to your DVD recorder or VCR to make copies. ●

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Through A Lens, Cheaply

Digital Camcorders For The Budget-Minded

We all love pictures of vacations, kids, pets, and special occasions or maybe even all four together. These days, digital camcorders have pretty well become a must-have for capturing these moments on video, but they cost money. What you might not know is that prices for digicams have dropped substantially in the last couple of years, and what once was a prohibitive cost for a family on a budget is now much more manageable. For less than \$500, indeed in some cases for less than \$400, you can get a camcorder that will keep you happily filming for months.

What To Look For

The digital camcorder market is filled with products, and most of them share a range of features. The features worth paying careful attention to as you narrow down your purchasing decision include the following:

Size and weight. Digital camcorders are designed so you can carry them around and use them spontaneously. Still, they vary markedly in shape and portability. So if you're in a store that has a variety of choices, pick up each camera and walk around with it; hold the camera in the position you'll most frequently use for capturing video to make sure it's comfortable in your hand and doesn't weigh you down after holding it for a few minutes. Also, with the salesperson's permission, see if the camcorder will fit in your purse, and if it does, feel how heavy it will be on your shoulder.

LCD. Camcorders still have the traditional eye view finders, but most people today use the LCD (also called viewscreen) when recording. The LCD (usually 2.5 inches) not only lets you record more comfortably, but it also gives a more accurate representation of what the recording will look like. The main thing to look for is the

display's usability while recording. Make sure it shows you what you need to see as you hold the camcorder in a variety of positions.

CCD Resolution. The CCD (charge coupled device) sensors in your camera help determine the resolution of the video image and thus its quality. (They also help determine color quality.) The more CCDs in your camcorder the better, although budget cameras usually have only one. The CCD resolution is given in terms of **effective** pixels; this rating gives you the resolution for tape-based camcorders (which most budget camcorders are). For effective pixels, 300,000 should be the lowest you accept, with 340,000 and higher even better.

Zoom capabilities. Digital camcorders offer both optical and digital zoom. Look for camcorders with at least 20X optical zoom. Digital zoom ratings are far higher, but they're also far less useful because the image becomes pixelated—the pixels are stretched over too much area, making the image choppy.

Image stabilization. Tripods are still the best way to keep your videos from displaying how unsteady your hand is, but because you don't always have a tripod handy, digital image stabilization is the next best thing. Be sure your camera offers this feature.

PC connectivity. Editing your video on your PC means you have to get the footage onto your hard drive. You have two primary choices here: USB 2.0 and FireWire (also known as iLINK).

TV connectivity. Any digital camcorder you buy today will have at least one means of connecting to your VCR, TV, and/or standalone DVD recorder. Almost certainly it will have RCA jacks, but look for a camcorder with an S-Video connector if you intend to watch your videos on your TV



However, few camcorders for this price create digital pictures at resolutions higher than 800 x 600 pixels, so don't expect to use your digital camcorder as a direct replacement for your digital camera. In a pinch, though, they're great for this purpose.

For a rundown of the different types of recording media available (and the pros and cons of each), see the "Where To Begin" section of the "Go Digital" article on page 34.

Our Recommendations

With all of these features in mind, we'll recommend a few sturdy, dependable camcorders for users who don't want

Accessorizing

Camcorders come with everything you need to get started taking videos, but as you probably expect, there are lots of accessories you'll want to consider, too. The first thing to consider is extra media. A three-pack of MiniDV from JVC tapes costs \$20.99 (www.jvc.com), and a four-pack of Sony Hi8 tapes (www.sonystyle.com), designed for Digital8 recording, costs \$19.95. Rechargeable battery packs, such as the \$149.99 Sony InfoLithium models, typically cost \$150 or more, while a battery charger for use in your car will set you back between \$69—the price of Sony's DCC-L50B—and \$125—the cost of the Canon CBC-NB2. You'll likely want a bag that protects the camcorder; plan to spend between \$20 to \$50 for a shoulder bag and \$60 to \$90 for backpack styles. A small Kenneth Cole Reaction Mini Camcorder bag, for example, costs \$32.99 (www.bestbuy.com).

If you want to bathe your subject in light for brighter videos, consider a lighting attachment. Sony offers the 3-watt HVL-S3D light for \$39.99 and the 10-watt HVL-10DC for \$69.99 among many others. Finally, a tripod (\$30 to \$80) is always an excellent idea, steadying your camcorder and freeing you up to move around. Sunpak has several models across a variety of price points (www.tocad.com/tripods). ●

frequently. (You still need a stereo RCA cable to listen to the sound.) S-Video offers substantially better video resolution than RCA.

Still pictures. You're not restricted to taking only video with today's camcorders. You can also take still pictures, which is great because you won't have to tote around two devices.

to spend a lot. Here they are—four top-notch camcorders for anyone with a budget of \$500.

Sony DCR-HC32

\$499 • www.sonystyle.com

This digicam is great for users who want the ultimate in portability. The DCR-HC32 is small (2.2 inches wide x 4.4



Capturing the events of everyday life is invaluable, and once you decide to buy a digital camcorder, there are a few factors to remember to get the most from it.

inches deep) and light (14 ounces), and it takes accurate video even in low-light settings. You can even plug the DCR-HC32 into a PC with an Internet connection and stream your video to friends and family. The camera comes with a docking station containing both FireWire and USB 1.1 ports, so connectivity is easy. However, you need to carry the docking station with you if you intend to transfer video or still photos to your notebook or PDA while traveling.

Canon ZR300

\$499 • www.usa.canon.com

It's hard not to like an entry-level camcorder that has an Easy switch to automate all settings, along with clearly marked large controls for focus and night mode, but the ZR300 goes beyond mere usability. This MiniDV camcorder is perfect for an active family who is constantly at soccer games, dance lessons, and gymnastics. It has a backlit LCD for easier outdoor shooting, and the video quality is excellent for home movies or Web-based video. Connectivity is through FireWire, so be sure you have a port on your PC.

JVC GR-D270US

\$449.95 • www.jvc.com

This MiniDV camera has a built-in light to help offset low-light environments, and its impressive 25X optical zoom lets you get strong close-ups. Its still pictures lack sharpness and good contrast, so keep your digital camera, but the GR-D270US succeeds on a healthy variety of

Breaking The Budget

Have you set aside more than \$500 to spend on your camcorder? No problem—we can help you get rid of it.

Consider JVC's Everio GZ-MC500 (www.jvc.com), for example, at \$1,799.99, it features three-CCD video quality and takes excellent video and 5-megapixel stills, obviating the need for a separate digital camera. It also sports a 4GB removable drive.

Panasonic's PV-GS250 (www.panasonic.com) is \$800 cheaper at \$999.95 and also offers three-CCD quality and fairly high-res, rapid-fire stills.

Canon's XL2 MiniDV (consumer.usa.canon.com) camcorder clocks in at \$4,999, for which you get three CCDs, high-quality stills, and professional-level focus and stabilization controls, along with widescreen filming (16:9 ratio).

Sony's HDR-HC1 (\$1,999; www.sonystyle.com) is one of the first high-definition models on the market, recording in 16:9 mode and offering 3MP stills.

If you want to go just above your budget and try a DVD-based camcorder, Panasonic's VDR-M53 (\$599.95; www.panasonic.com) records to both DVD-RAMs and DVD-Rs. ●


other levels, including its ability to capture quality colors in low-light settings.

Sony DCR-TRV480

\$349.99 • www.sonystyle.com

We've included this Digital8 product for those who have a collection of Hi8 cassettes sitting around and don't want to waste them, and the price point is perfect for a user fresh out of college or a young family with a new baby. The TRV480 is a classic Sony Handycam, with the company's Super NightShot Plus technology that lets you shoot very good pictures in dim settings. The camera includes a useful collection of editing tools, and its 640 x 480 still photos come out better than those of many more expensive MiniDV cameras.

You're Ready For Your Closeup

Capturing the events of everyday life is invaluable, and once you decide to buy a digital camcorder, there are a few factors to remember to get the most from it. First, if you're planning on any extensive shoots (such as your friend's wedding), buy some extra media and an extra battery pack. Second, figure out how your camcorder works—completely—before you start to record anything important. Third, no matter what you want to capture, don't forget to put the camcorder down to experience the actual event. These things are great, but not as great as the real thing. 

BY NEIL RANDALL



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The Family Channel

Shop For The Best Digital Camcorder For Your Family

Consumer studies in 2002 by Interval Research confirmed what most of us could guess without using questionnaires: Families tend to buy their first camcorder around the time their first child is born. Another not-altogether-astonishing conclusion is that the camcorder tends to wind up in Dad's hands most of the time, while Mom specializes in still photos. We'd bet that, as camcorder sales have exploded over the past few years, this trend has been evening out.

Less obvious are patterns of camcorder use and how they change over time: Initially, the camcorder comes out mainly to capture the baby's antics and milestones, so you can keep them for posterity and share them with grandparents. However, infants have a lot of down time, so, perhaps surprisingly, camcorder use tends to be infrequent and in short bursts.

As children grow older, not only do parents use the camcorder for longer periods of time, but the lens is also following the kids to outings such as birthday parties and trips to the amusement park. A newer trend that emerged is using the camera to record soccer games and other sports—not just to relive a win, but also to review performance and look for ways to improve it.

Finally, at some point, the kids start using the camera, sometimes even becoming the primary users. And because kids are becoming tech-savvy at earlier and earlier ages (many understand basic computer use before they even start school), we wouldn't be surprised if this tendency extends to video.

Narrow Your Focus

If you're looking for a digital camcorder for your family, you may have your eye out for different features than serious video geeks do. No law says parents can't be video geeks too, but they're parents first and foremost, and



the buying decision may hinge on a different, or at least supplemental, set of criteria.

Chances are, your first concern will be that the camcorder is rugged enough to withstand the jolts and jostles that are unavoidable in any busy family, especially if your kids will be getting their hands on it. No, a camcorder isn't a toy, but try telling that to a two-year-old, many of whom seem able to dismantle a cannonball in 10 seconds or less. If a camcorder has a "plasticky" feeling, it may not hold up as well around young Dr. Destructo as a unit that feels more substantial. Check moving parts such as sliders and switches, too, to make sure they feel firmly attached.

You'll also want a unit whose controls seem logical and uncomplicated, although that will (of course) vary from user to user; we all have different ideas on what constitutes user-friendliness. At the very least, it's helpful if a unit provides an obvious way to switch back and forth between manual and automated control.

You may also want a camcorder that can grow along with the kids, as everyone's interests and activities evolve. This is where accessories come in. If the cam has an accessory shoe, it will let you mount such items as lights and microphones. You may not need these extras when you first get the camcorder, but they could come in handy later, when you're filming your kids at a greater distance: games, school plays, etc.

You may also want a unit with a night mode for filming your kids' backyard campouts and trick-or-treating on Halloween. Many camcorders enable close night shooting with a front-mounted light, but some kids may find a glaring white light annoying. Camcorders that use infrared vision will let you do your shooting much more unobtrusively.

What We Want In Our Camcorder

Look at several models online and rank the specs you'd most like to have in your own camcorder. Then, take this checklist to the store with you as you shop and compare the top three models.

Feature:	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Family Friendly Features: A Checklist

- ☐ Durability
- ☐ User-friendly control layout
- ☐ Ergonomic design
- ☐ Lightweight
- ☐ Accessory compatibility
- ☐ Night mode

It may be a challenge to find a unit that conforms to every last wish, but if you rank your priorities and do some comparison-shopping, you should be able to find something that meets your family's needs. Use our tear-out worksheet to help order your priorities and compare prospective models.

We consulted some of the camcorder market's top manufacturers for their recommendations and came away with a few models to get you started. They're all compact and lightweight, tipping the scales at roughly a pound apiece.

Canon ZR400

\$549 • www.canonusa.com

Canon positions its entire ZR line as family friendly and budget-conscious, and the ZR400 leads the pack. It's Canon's cheapest camcorder to feature a chip with 1MP (megapixel) resolution. If you have a widescreen TV, or plan on getting one, the good news is: The ZR400 has a dedicated button so you can instantly toggle between shooting in standard (4:3) and high-resolution widescreen (16:9) ratios.

It also comes with a wide-angle lens attachment that will broaden outdoor vistas and let you capture more of the action at once during indoor

gatherings. The ZR400 even does double-duty as a Web cam. Just link it to your PC to use with Microsoft Windows Messenger's video chat feature for online family reunions.

JVC GR-D270US

\$449.95 • www.jvc.com

Ergonomics counts, and JVC tries something a little different with this one: The adjustable handstrap on the unit's side is anchored diagonally, rather than horizontally along the bottom, the positioning you'll find on most camcorders. We like the feeling of support it provides, and you'll surely appreciate it too while you film a high-energy soccer game with lots of enthusiastic parents cheering around you. It's the lowest priced camcorder here but still feels quite sturdy and boasts a respectable 25X optical zoom, a spec exceeded only by the Panasonic model.

Panasonic PV-GS35

\$499.95 • www.panasonic.com

If you need to get up close and personal while still filming from a distance, the PV-GS35 will let you pull it off. It has a 30X optical zoom—at press time, the highest level available in a camcorder. Yet it's the smallest of our first three units, all of which use MiniDV cassettes. And if you want photographs to go along with your footage, you can film and take snapshots simultaneously.

Like an increasing number of camcorders, including the Canon and Sony models we feature here, the PV-GS35 has a high-speed USB 2.0 connection rather than a DV (FireWire) connection. That means you're more likely to be able to import video into a reasonably recent PC with plug-and-play ease. Unlike Macs and high-end PCs, many budget PCs come standard only

Let The Kids Take Over

So your children insist on taking the helm of your camcorder. Time for a cardiac arrest? Not necessarily! With a few precautions and patient guidance, you can teach them to capture their own point-of-view for posterity.

Educate yourself first. Hunker down and do some taping from your children's height. You might be surprised at how this shift in perspective will train you to see things the way your little ones do, so you're better equipped to offer pointers as they're

learning to film for themselves.

Share the view. Two can watch a camcorder's flip-out display as easily as one. While filming, have your child follow the live action on the display as you demonstrate how to frame and hold a shot, pan, zoom, and so on.

Use a neck strap. Few things cause more instant stress than seeing your tot drop a device that cost hundreds of dollars. Camcorder handstraps aren't made for kids' hands and probably won't be very secure for them. Before turning the lens over to

your junior partner, attach a neck strap to the camcorder and let that be your defense against the floor.

Or try a tripod. If your child is especially young, you may not want to allow handheld shooting yet. A tripod with its legs extended just a few inches will stabilize your camcorder while letting your child get hands-on experience to learn the unit's operational basics.

For more, see our accompanying article, "Tips: Give Your Camcorder To Your Kids," on page 52. ●


with USB ports, requiring you to pay extra to add FireWire ports or adapters. It's a mere \$40 upgrade in many cases, and well worth it . . . but only if you need it.

Sony DCR-DVD7
\$699.99 • www.sonystyle.com

This one totally reinvents camcorder design. At 3 x 4.75 x 2 inches (HxWxD),

with no protruding battery, it's our smallest and lightest unit and has a rounded shape that's extremely travel-friendly, so it's perfect for a road trip to Grandma's house. It flips open like a compact, so you can insert various types of recordable DVD media. If you have a DVD player in your vehicle, your passengers could conceivably start watching the footage from your day's outing before you even get home.

Other plusses include regular Sony features such as the Easy Handycam button, which reduces shooting to point-and-shoot simplicity, and Super NightShot Plus, an infrared night mode that we find to be among the best in the business.

The unit's more traditionally shaped sibling, the DCR-DVD403 (\$999.99), adds features such as 5.1 surround-sound recording, an accessory shoe, and a range of compatible accessories. 

BY BRIAN HODGE



Shopping Tips

Online bargains abound and Internet shopping is convenient, but you're better off not buying a digital camcorder sight-unseen. Check out prospective models in person and keep these tips in mind.

Don't be satisfied until you've handled the camcorder freely. In many electronics stores, you'll find display units tethered to the case with short, stout cables that make handling the camcorder cumbersome and unnatural. Ask a sales rep if you can try out a unit free of

its anchor, so you can get a better feel for it.

And how does it feel? Camcorders are generally designed for one-handed operation; that's especially important for the parent of a small child who may have to spring into action with that free hand. Still, this doesn't mean all camcorders will feel equally right. Feel will vary depending on the unit's design and how it fits the size and shape of your hand. Go with a model whose most important controls—on/off/mode switch, filming

button, zoom control—fall naturally under your thumb and fingertips, without having to cramp your fingers or make uncomfortable stretches.

Make sure you can tote it around with ease. However you expect to stow the unit while it's in transit (purse, diaper bag, etc.), make sure it goes in and out without getting caught on other items. Also, check how the bag feels slung from your shoulder. Ideally, you'll want something light enough to go unnoticed.

Forget about digital zoom. Camcorder specs usually list two types of zoom: optical and digital. Ignore the latter and pay attention only to the optical spec, which refers to the lens' power. Digital zoom simply enlarges the image captured at the highest optical zoom, and it quickly starts looking jagged and blocky. If your choice is between a unit boasting 12X optical/800X digital zoom and one with 20X optical/400X digital zoom, you'll get much better performance where it counts out of the second model. ●



Share Memories With Movies

Give The Gift Of Digital Video

Digital camcorders are supposed to make your life easier, but what the manufacturers don't tell you is that once you buy one you're pretty much on your own. Sure, shooting video is incredibly easy, and most newer camcorders let you edit video while it's still in the camcorder. But what then? How do you get that video onto a computer for further editing, and what do you do with your movies once they're put together? How do you share them with your loved ones?

Transfer The Footage

The first step in making movie magic is getting your video onto your computer's hard drive for editing. Most digital camcorders output video to a PC using

a FireWire (also called iLINK) cable. Budget-priced camcorders don't come with a FireWire cable, so checking at the store will save you a trip back for a new cable. And make sure your PC has FireWire ports, as well. Newer PCs and laptop computers usually do, but if not you may need to buy and install a FireWire card, an external FireWire port that connects to the PC via a more common USB 2.0 interface, or a sound card that has a FireWire port built in, such as one from Creative's Audigy series (www.soundblaster.com).

Edit & Author Video

Let's face it; do you *really* need two hours of video showing your daughter riding her bike? It might be painful at first, but it's in everyone's best interest to consider editing all that video you've transferred to your PC (look for our recommendations in the "Top Video-Editing Software" sidebar) before you record it to a DVD. Some software supports direct DV (Digital Video) to DVD recordings, letting you transfer video from the camcorder straight to a DVD recorder. You'll probably only want to do that for movies you don't want to edit such as weddings or school plays. The best software editors for beginners have lots of theme templates and special effects so you can create movie-like transitions and high-quality menus without starting from scratch.

Editing software that lets you work with multiple audio and video tracks (called multitrack editing) also is nice. These programs, such as those we mention in the "Top Video-Editing Software" sidebar, let you overlay several video and audio feeds to create transitions and special effects, and the ability to separately manipulate audio tracks is invaluable. With multitrack audio editing, it's easy to narrate videos, add background music, or mix the two to spice up your home videos.

Of course, if you want to narrate your video footage as you edit, you're going to need a microphone. Nearly all PCs and sound cards have a microphone jack that works with a standard analog microphone, although you may need to buy a 1/4-inch-to-1/8-inch audio adapter to make your microphone

compatible with your sound card's 1/8-inch jack. There are also several USB microphones on the market that are easy to install, and they work with any PC that has a USB port. Examples include Logitech's USB Desktop Microphone (\$29.99; www.logitech.com) and the Plantronics DSP-500

Top Video-Editing Software

You'll probably want video-editing software that's powerful, yet easy to use and relatively inexpensive. The following four choices are tops whether you've been filming and editing footage of your 15-year-old son since birth or you bought a shiny new camera to capture your niece's first tiny cries.

Adobe Premiere Elements

\$99.99 • www.adobe.com

Premiere Elements handles everything from the initial video transfer to the final DVD recording process, and it provides some powerful video- and audio-editing tools in between. It comes with a variety of transitions and special effects, and you edit in real-time, meaning you don't have to wait to see the results of your edits. If you're feeling really lazy, the software can even automatically create scene indexes for easy menu creation.

Pinnacle Studio Plus

\$99.99 • www.pinnacle.com

Pinnacle Studio has a terrific user interface that makes it easy for beginners to get started, but it's powerful enough to cater to more advanced users. Special effects and transitions are easy to apply and are also immediately visible, and the integrated authoring tool makes it easy to create navigation menus. Using the SmartSound feature, you can edit background music to exactly fit the length of your video, which can be a chore in other editing suites.

Ulead VideoStudio 9

\$99.99 • www.ulead.com

If you need to create a DVD in a jiff, VideoStudio 9 can automatically scan a DV tape, divide it into scenes, create a navigation interface, and record everything directly to disc with minimal user

input. If you want to roll up your sleeves and do everything yourself, the interface is accommodating. The uninitiated will also find plenty of templates to serve as a framework.

iLife '05

\$79 • www.apple.com

Apple's iLife '05 (which is free when you buy a new Mac computer) has great digital audio and digital photo-editing capabilities and also has, arguably, the most user-friendly digital video-editing and DVD-authoring tools on the market. The iMovie HD software makes it easy to add transitions and special effects to a video, and it even handles HD video from the latest camcorders that support that technology. When you've edited your footage, transfer it to iDVD 5 to create some stunning menus and crisp text overlays before burning your creation to practically any type of DVD media. ●

USB headset with microphone (\$89.95; www.plantronics.com).

Another cool feature some editing programs offer is the ability to create

Don't Forget Email

Sharing movies via DVD is great when you want to take the time to edit, record, print, and mail everything, but for shorter clips, email is often a better option. The best way to make a video suitable for sharing is to reduce its size and save it in a compressed video format that takes up far less storage space than DV from a camcorder—1 or 2 megabytes is ideal. Mac users can rely on iMovie HD for this task, and Windows XP users have access to a free editor called Windows Movie Maker 2, which is great for creating small, email-ready videos. Other video editors also have this functionality, but Movie Maker 2 was specifically designed to be easy to use and to compress movies enough that they are ideal for emailing.

You'll need WinXP, and you can download the latest version here: www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/downloads. The software is incredibly easy to use, has a variety of special effects and transitions, and makes it easy to add text overlays such as titles and scrolling credits. When saving the edited video, use the wizard that pops up to select Email and click Next. After the movie is saved, Movie Maker automatically fires up your default email application and attaches the video so you can send it to your far-flung high-school buddies, your sister in Baltimore, or your aunt in San Diego. ●

menus for easy navigation. The process used to create those menus is called **authoring**, and the best video-editing programs have this functionality built into them.

Record DVDs

Creating DVDs of your movies requires a DVD recorder. Recording speeds are listed using terms such as "8X" or "16X," and the fastest 16X recorders can write to a 4.7GB DVD in six minutes or less.

The best recorders support every type of popular recordable DVD media, including DVD-R, DVD+R, DVD-RW, and DVD+RW. The "R" discs are recordable, meaning you can record to them only once. Recordable discs are ideal for creating backup archives for your videos and are relatively inexpensive. The "RW" discs are rewriteable, meaning you can record data to them anywhere from hundreds to thousands of times, much like a computer's hard drive. DVD-RWs are more expensive than DVD-Rs, and fewer consumer DVD players read DVD-RWs,

so they work best as file repositories for your PC. Dual-layer discs store up to twice as much video as single-layer discs, but are usually overkill for home movie recording. A single-layer disc stores up to two hours of high-quality video, while a dual-layer disc stores up to four hours of high-quality video. Some programs let you store up to four hours of video on a single-layer disc or eight hours on a dual-layer disc, but the quality of the video suffers when you do this. Stick to one or two hours per single-layer disc or two to four hours of video per dual-layer disc for the best playback quality.

All of the editing software we recommend make DVDs you can play back in most consumer DVD players. Unfortunately, not all players can read these types of discs, and spending more money doesn't guarantee compatibility, but most of today's players, such as the Panasonic DVD-S29S (\$69.95; www.panasonic.com) and Sony DVP-NS50P/B (\$79.95; www.sonystyle.com), can handle them. (Ironically, the

cheapo players are more likely to play any format than more expensive players because they use computer DVD-ROM drives. Price has nothing to do with whether a player supports playback of a particular format.) If you can't record DVDs with your editing software, you should invest in a good DVD recording program. Nero 6 Ultra Edition (\$79.99; www.nero.com) is an excellent recording suite that supports practically every DVD recorder ever made.

Customize Your DVDs

DVDs of your children's summer activities or school plays can make great gifts



Basic Troubleshooting: Top 4 Dilemmas

Digital video is much easier to work with than analog video, but it still has some drawbacks. Here's how to handle four common problems:

Problem #1: DVDs won't play on a standard DVD player. Not all consumer DVD players can handle recordable DVDs, and even fewer can read DVD-RWs. Look in your DVD player's manual to see what formats it can read and use those discs when recording.

Problem #2: Errors during DVD burning. One

error during recording can ruin an entire disc, so you want to avoid making any errors. To do this, record at slower speeds (8X or even 4X for a 16X drive, for example). You may need to reduce the speed to as low as 1X to avoid errors on slower computers. Try a different brand of recordable disc (preferably a name-brand, such as Sony or TDK) and avoid running any other programs while you're recording.

Problem #3: Video-editing software is extremely slow. If your

video-editing software chokes on a video, divide the video into smaller pieces and edit them individually. If that doesn't help, you may need to upgrade the computer's processor or add more memory. 512MB of memory is a minimum for video editing, and 1GB or more is recommended. Also make sure your hard drive isn't full (it should have at least a few gigabytes free), or your computer will slow to a crawl.

Problem #4: DVDs don't record at the recorder's advertised

maximum speed. If you're using an older computer, you'll likely never achieve the advertised speeds. You may be in a position to take on the expense of upgrading your CPU, memory, and hard drive, which will definitely speed things up, or you may decide now's a good time to invest in a newer, faster computer. If not, unless you're really pressed for time, you can always read a good book while your computer slowly records your DVD. ●

for grandparents or other family members, and creating a personalized label and case adds some neat finishing touches. Some products, such as HP's DVD Writer 640i (\$109.99; www.hp.com) with LightScribe (www.lightscribe.com) technology, can burn images and text directly into the top of a compatible disc, eliminating the need for a separate label. Aside from that, specialty products such as Acoustica's CD/DVD Label Maker (\$21.95; www.acoustica.com) and CD Stomper (\$33.42; www.cdstomper.com) let you create and print full-color labels.

You can buy cheap plastic cases for your DVDs at any computer or electronics store, but if you want to get fancy, consider a kit from Jewelboxing (\$54 for 20 cases; www.jewelboxing.com). It includes cases, all of the inserts you need

(preperforated to fit the jewel case), and template software that's compatible with a variety of image-editing

programs so you can create any design you like.



Less Is More

Be a little circumspect: With this many creative tools at your fingertips, it's easy to pack a movie full of special effects, transitions, and other seemingly cool touches that may overwhelm or annoy your audience. With few exceptions, keep it simple if you want to have the best videos on the block: Use simple cuts or fades to transition between most scenes, don't use wacky fonts or too much motion for your titles and credits, and keep any background music or noises low-key for most scenes. Your digital videos provide a lifetime of memories, and simplicity is the best way to make them as timeless as possible. **CE**

BY TRACY BAKER



Editor's Top 10

Reasons I Love These Devices

Wave to the camera! *CE Lifestyles* editor Katie Sommer reveals why today's digital camcorders are cool enough to turn anyone into her city's Woody Allen.

1 Digital cameras are great for capturing a moment, but digital camcorders are perfect for capturing an entire memory.

2 Digital camcorders reveal interesting, thought-provoking perspectives, especially in the hands of kids.

3 Though your best friend couldn't join you in Hawaii, at least she can experience your trip with you when you watch your video from Mauna Kea after you get home.

4 You'll theoretically be able to watch your home videos on DVD for a hundred years, while VHS tapes will last only a fraction of that.

5 You can create cool case covers and DVD labels to personalize your videos and give them to family and friends as keepsakes.

6 Remember how your old analog camcorder would often clearly record the voices of the women

chatting next to you instead of your daughter's monologue onstage during her school play? Today's digital camcorders offer ways to prevent this and other annoying obtrusions to your prized footage.

7 Go ahead, bring your digital camcorder to the zoo. Most of them are light enough that you can carry them around for hours without getting a sore shoulder.

8 Digital camcorders are more budget-friendly than ever before, so more and more people can afford a high-quality camcorder for their families.

9 No longer are you burdened with a huge device with an equally large carrying case; many of today's digital camcorders are small enough that you can just throw them in your tote or diaper bag.

10 Videos often end up being some of the most cherished possessions of families who have lost loved ones.

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Tips

Give Your Camcorder To Your Kids

Teach The Basics

When your child asks to use the camcorder, resist the urge to tell her no and instead embrace her genuine interest in learning. To ease the nervousness you may both feel about this new adventure, sit down for a half hour and go over the camcorder's buttons and features together so your child knows exactly how to start and stop recording, zoom in and out, and judge how much battery or taping time is left. Also make sure she knows how heavy the camcorder will be and how to hold it properly. (This will put Mom's mind at ease, too!) These lessons will let you see that she knows how to responsibly use the device and will prevent her from being frustrated by the unfamiliar buttons during her first recording attempt.

Start Simple

Help your child learn to control the camcorder by suggesting she first record fairly uneventful activities that won't involve her moving the camera much.

Have her hook up the camcorder to a tripod and tape her younger siblings playing in the living room or you cooking dinner until she knows she is comfortable enough to record an event that requires more movement. Then she can tape while walking so she can practice balancing the camcorder while using its settings and buttons. Practicing with the tripod and then while walking will also help her determine her preference for using the LCD vs. the viewfinder and make her more at ease using the zoom features without wobbling the camera.

Ask For Input

If you only pull out the camcorder for special occasions, you can sometimes miss the most entertaining and candid moments of everyday life. Ask your child if there is a specific activity she has in mind to tape. She may simply want to get to know how the camcorder works and, therefore, could tape daily goings-on at your house, which could include some hysterical scenes of the

baby eating or touching moments of your husband reading to your youngest child. If she wants to tape a larger group of people, ask if she can think of an event she wants to record so she can avoid the typical "Hi!" wave that many give the camera when they see the red light blinking. Asking for her input will reassure her that you value her opinion and allow her to express her originality while taping.

Learn About Lighting

As your child masters the features of the camcorder, she should experiment in various settings to learn how lighting can affect what a scene looks like on tape. Let her tape in several rooms in the house and send her to the backyard to tape, say, her dog playing in the morning, during the afternoon, and at sunset. Because the LCD is sometimes difficult to see clearly in direct sunlight, have her experiment using both the viewfinder and LCD so she can decide which one she is more comfortable using in each lighting situation. Then have her sit with you while you transfer the video to your computer or view it on your TV so she can see how each scene's lighting affects the clarity of the video on a larger screen.

Encourage Creativity

After your child becomes more comfortable holding and using the camcorder, let her roam without you by her side so she doesn't think you are judging how she is doing. She will feel as if she is accomplishing something on her own and may begin to develop a real love of using the camera. This kind of exploring and creativity will help her grow into a more imaginative teenager and adult and possibly help her develop a long-lasting hobby or career. And you never know, the first introduction to your family's camcorder could lead to your child becoming the next Ron Howard.

BY JENNIFER SUGGITT

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Preserve Halloween Memories

Be Creative While Trick-Or-Treating

With Halloween approaching, chances are your kids have been hard at work dreaming up their ideal costumes. Don't let your little goblins get ahead of you; some thoughtful preparation on your part can produce perfect snapshots of your kids on their big night.

Get The Gear

For Halloween, the right camera will ensure that no golden moment with Batman slips by.

You're bound to have your hands busy with candy bags and costumes gone askew, so leave the backpack-sized camera case at home. Halloween may be the perfect occasion to indulge in a pocket-sized digital camera. One option is the new ultra-thin Casio Exilim EX-S500 (\$399.99; www.casio.com). It is barely larger than a credit card and lets you capture high-resolution photos and over an hour of video footage. Plus, you can choose from gray, white, or orange—perfect for Halloween!

Get The Shot

With a little creativity, you can capture Halloween's picture-perfect moments and create keepsakes that will last a lifetime.


Behind the mask. Take some shots of the kids without their masks on. You will be able to see priceless facial expressions, and you could have a great photo for this year's Christmas card. Also, capture your child's transformation to trick-or-treater. Some of the best pictures are taken while costuming is in progress.

Halloween fun. Let your kids get into character. At no other occasion will they be more

willing to provide you with hair-raising faces and genuine expressions. Also, ask your child if he has any special picture ideas in mind; using your kids' ideas could help put them at ease if they get nervous in front of the camera. Also, try to take good candid shots when the kids aren't aware you're photographing them; snap a shot of them scaring their neighbors or diving into their candy bags at the end of the night.

Capture the mood. To achieve the true, creepy spirit of Halloween, experiment with trading your usual camera flash for alternate sources of light. You can get eerie lighting from a group of lit candles or a glowing flashlight used to illuminate a scary face. However, when working with unusual lighting, you may find your pictures don't turn out as you see them in real life. To get the best results from your camera, refer to its manual to learn about special night mode settings for optimum Halloween pics.

Cherish The Experience

Once Halloween night is over, you'll likely find yourself with sleepy kids, a plethora of candy wrappers, and with luck, some great photos that will remind you of your fun-loving kids for years to come. 

BY SARIE WHITSON

Use a photo-editing program to turn your kids' favorite photos of themselves in disguise into fun coloring sheets. Experiment with black-and-white and artistic filters and then print the new versions so your kids can use crayons or markers to color themselves in their Halloween costumes. Look ahead to next autumn and make stickers to decorate future goody bags by printing favorite snapshots onto self-adhesive paper. You can also create a scrapbook of the best shots of your kids and their friends to serve as an idea book for future Halloweens. As the creative juices begin to flow, don't forget relatives who weren't able to see your little impersonators in their prime. Create a card collage of photos to mail to Grandpa and Grandma or a favorite out-of-town friend.

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Megapixel Madness

Don't Pay For Pixels You Won't Use



W

ith digicam specs, manufacturers gush about megapixels. But more megapixels means a higher price, often reaching the \$1,000 barrier and beyond. Before spending more than necessary for the pictures you want, understand how many megapixels you need.

The issue is that many camera shoppers have no idea how many megapixels they require. There's no clear-cut answer to this question, but knowing how you plan to use the final images will help you make a decision.

If you want to take snapshots you can email and post to a Web site, you don't need a megapixel-loaded monstrosity. A 6MP model would be overkill for these tasks, and you'd have to resize your pictures before they'd be compact enough to email. On the other hand, if you want to create 8- x 10-inch or larger prints, or if you heavily crop photos before you print, you'll need the extra data provided by a higher megapixel count; for those tasks you'll want at least 4 or more megapixels.

To help you navigate megapixel madness, we've listed some of our favorite cameras, along with the tasks that best suit each model. Keep these cameras and their features in mind as you shop.

3 & 4 Megapixels

Canon PowerShot A510

\$199.99

www.powershot.com

Canon's A510 is a 3.2MP model, and although it may skimp a bit on resolution, this model has redeeming traits. Most cameras in this range have 2X or 3X optical zoom, but the A510 includes a 4X zoom lens for greater reach. That lens is in a body that's relatively small (2.5 inches high x 3.5 inches wide) and lightweight (6.35 ounces), which means the A510 won't weigh you down like other so-called compact cameras.

With its maximum resolution, you can use this camera to create sharp 5- x 7-inch prints, but you might notice some detail deterioration if you prefer an 8 x 10. This one's also printer-friendly, as it includes a Print button that you can use to print directly to any PictBridge-compatible inkjet.



5 Megapixels

Canon PowerShot S2 IS

\$499.99
www.powershot.com

You can't miss the PowerShot S2 IS's standout feature—a 12X optical zoom lens, which provides four times the zoom power of many similarly sized cameras. And because long zoom lenses make blurry results more likely, the camera also incorporates an image stabilization feature to help you consistently capture sharp images.

You can create prints without a PC using the S2 IS's PictBridge technology, and with a 5MP image sensor behind Canon's well-regarded optics, you shouldn't have any problems creating 8 x 10 or letter-sized prints.

Sony Cyber Shot DSC-S90

\$279.95
www.sonystyle.com

The first thing you'll notice about Sony's DSC-S90 is the back side, which is home to a huge, 2.5-inch color monitor to help you frame your shots. The insides are important, too, of course, where you'll find 3X optical zoom, and just as important, a 4.1MP image sensor. Plus, Sony includes rechargeable AA batteries that, in the long run, will save you a lot of money on power.

This camera is compatible with PictBridge printers, so you don't need a PC to print. Just don't expect this camera's image quality to provide you with excellent-quality 8 x 10 prints; stick with 5 x 7 prints, though, and you'll likely be happy.

Kodak EasyShare DX7590

\$499
www.easysshare.com

Kodak designs its EasyShare cameras with novice users in mind, but its long list of features and 5MPs make the EasyShare DX7590 suitable for more advanced photographers, too. The DX7590 comes equipped with a larger-than-average color monitor that measures 2.2 inches, and it has a 10X optical zoom lens. Though on the surface it looks a lot like a complicated SLR (single-lens reflex) camera, this Kodak has a standard array of novice-oriented features, such as an audio-laced video mode and many preset scene modes for simpler shooting.

As with the Canon S2 IS, wildlife and sports photographers will appreciate the camera's long optical lens. Anyone

who scrutinizes printed photos from the DX7590 won't find anything to complain about, so long as you stick with 8 x 10 and smaller prints.

6+ Megapixels

Casio Exilim EX-Z750


\$449.99
www.casio-usa.com

It might seem hard to believe when you first see the EX-Z750, but this Casio really packs 7.2MPs into its slim body, which measures 3.5 inches wide, 2.3 inches high, and less than an inch thick. If you really need this much resolution and want to create enlargements, keep in mind that many super-compact cameras use lenses that degrade image quality a bit.

Still, this high-resolution model will capture enough data to let you create 8 x 10 and larger prints. And thanks to this camera's minute build, you'll be able to take it just about anywhere you go.



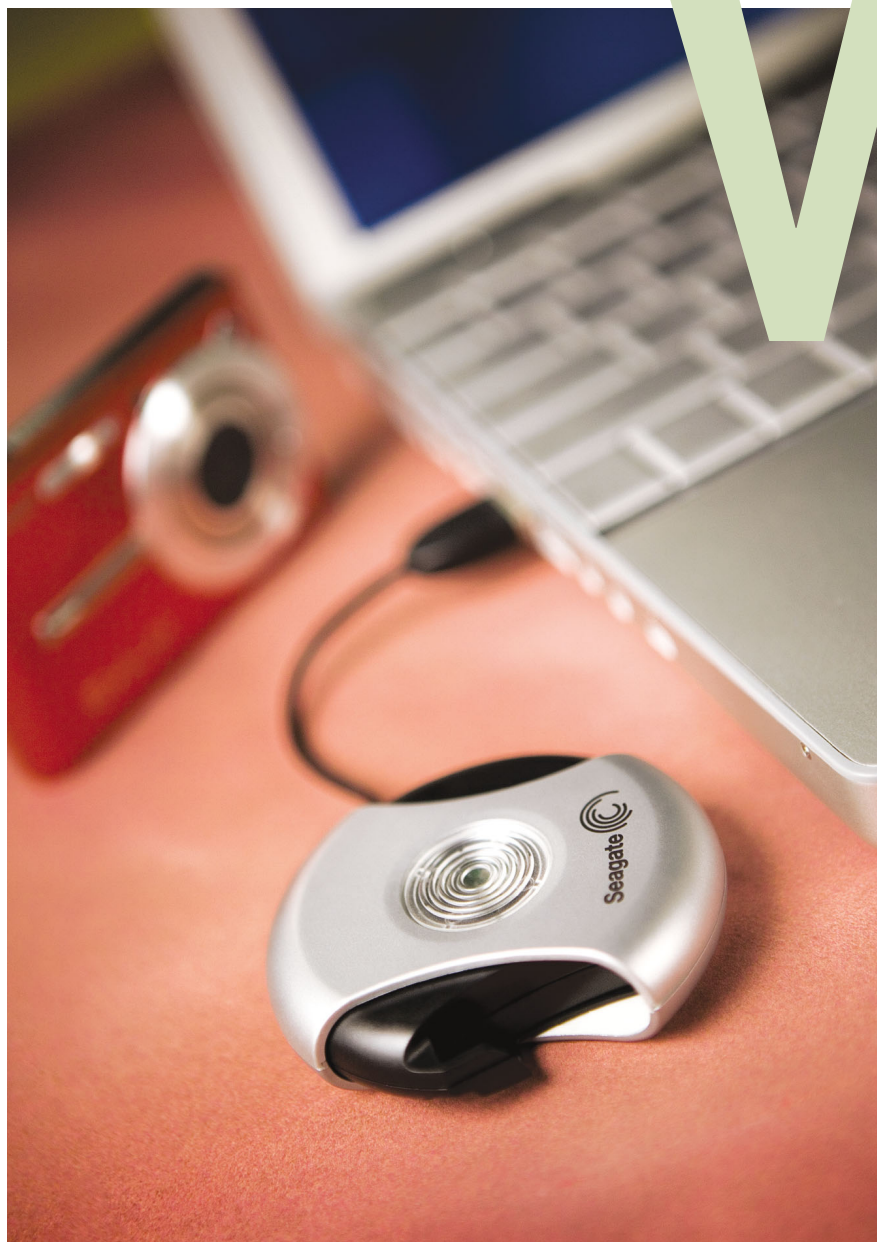
Megapixel Mojo

As you shop remember that few of us—except advanced photographers—notice the differences in quality when comparing images from, for example, a 3MP camera and a 7MP model. So, unless you plan on making a lot of enlargements, you can scale back on your megapixel requirements and spend the money you save on better accessories. 

BY NATHAN CHANDLER

Take Your Photos With You

Storage Devices & Digital Albums
Are Brag Books To Go



We all know how easy it is to distribute our digital photos to friends and family through email and online photo sites, but often we want to share our snapshots when the hardware just isn't there. Somewhere between lugging our laptop or bulky photo albums is a happy medium, a digital brag book that lets you take your photos with you.

Digital photo albums and spiffy multimedia devices can let you do that, and we'll introduce you to them. But in case your budget can't accommodate those items, we'll also show you some smaller, less expensive alternatives that will effectively expand your camera's storage capacity.

Portable Hard Drives

Normally we think of HDDs (hard disk drives) as the main storage devices in our desktop PCs and laptops. But a number of companies make portable HDDs, a compact means of storing and transferring files. You can connect them to your computer or laptop and transfer digital photos to them.

Seagate (www.seagate.com), for instance, makes USB 2.0 Pocket Hard Drives in 2.5GB (\$139) and 5.0GB (\$179) sizes. The drives weigh just 2.2 ounces,

Why Get One?

How often does your digital camera leave home with you? The more you're on the go with it, the more you'll benefit from some type of digital photo storage device. Consider these advantages.

- **Extra protection.** If your camera is lost, stolen, or damaged, the storage device can protect all your other images.
- **File it away.** These devices can back up and store many types of files, not just photos.
- **Pack it away.** Even the largest storage device is small enough to tuck away in a pocket or bag; many come with their own carrying cases.
- **Feature rich.** Multi-use devices offer many other features you'll be glad to have on the road.
- **A cinch to sync.** High-end, multipurpose products can sync with the content of Windows Media Player.

are less than 1 inch high, and don't require a battery because they run off the power of your computer. The built-in USB cable retracts into the drive's shell when not in use.

At the other end of the size spectrum are two StoreJet models from Transcend (www.transcendusa.com): the 1.8-inch, 40GB model (\$201) and the 2.5-inch, 80GB model (\$160). They connect to your computer or notebook via USB 2.0 ports and can transfer up to 60MB of data in a second. Each comes with a leather carrying case, USB 2.0 cable, and a CD containing the software you'll need to install on your desktop or notebook PC. For even more storage capacity, there's Seagate's 100GB Portable Drive (\$259), and the company plans to release a 120GB unit this year.



The downside to portable HDDs is that they aren't designed—yet—to connect directly to your digital camera. Still, they are a pretty good option as long as your ultimate destination for the files is another computer.

USB Flash Drive

A USB flash drive is another type of portable hard drive, only smaller and markedly more portable. These devices are typically so small, you can put one (or two) in your pocket, in your purse, or on a chain around your neck. Just plug the drive directly into the USB port of your computer or notebook—no cables or software required—and you're ready to upload or download photo files.

Delkin Devices (www.delkin.com) manufactures a line of affordable eFilm USB 2.0 flash drives, which are backward compatible with USB 1.1 ports. Your PC needs to be running Windows 98SE or one of the more recent Windows operating systems. The largest size in the Delkin lineup is 1GB (\$127.99). Other sizes include 512MB (\$74.99), 256MB (\$41.99), 128MB (\$36.99), and 64MB (\$21.99).

Bridge The Gap

If portable HDDs appeal to you, but you'd rather not use your PC or notebook as a middleman, you could try Delkin's USB Bridge (\$69.99). This small device, which weighs just 3.4 ounces with two AA batteries installed, can transfer files from one USB-compatible device to another. That includes digital cameras, MP3 players, memory card readers, and flash drives.

The one big drawback is that you have to copy all of the content on the source device to the destination device. You can't select which files to transfer.

Digital Albums

A major step up from portable HDDs is a digital photo album, a product that stores and displays images.

Transcend's Digital Album (\$357) can connect to a computer or laptop (as long as it's running Win98 and newer) through a USB port. You can load photos directly from your camera into the album, as long as your camera uses one of the supported memory cards: SD, miniSD (with adapter), MMC,


Memory Stick, MicroDrive, Smart-Media, or CompactFlash.

The album has a 20GB, 1.8-inch hard drive and a 2.5-inch, high-resolution, full-color LCD panel. It weighs about 8 ounces and is just 0.96 x 3.29 x 4.38 inches (HxWxD). With the TV out cable, you can connect the album to your TV and show the photos there with the help of the included remote control. Or you can use the included



Delkin's USB 2.0 flash drives can accommodate from 64MB to 1GB of photos.

ear phones and listen to MP3 music files, which the album also supports.

That last feature technically makes the Photo Album a multimedia tool. If you're impressed with its features, check out what the products in the "Multi-Use Devices" sidebar can do. 

BY RACHEL DEROWITSCH

Multi-Use Devices

For a little more money, a multimedia device may be the best portable companion for your digital camera. These four brands cover a range of prices and features.

Apple iPod. The products formerly known as iPod and iPod photo were merged this past summer to create an all-in-one player: the white iPod with color display.

This new line of iPod players comes in two sizes: the 5.9-ounce 20GB model (\$299; 4.1 x 2.4 x 0.63), and the 6.4-ounce 60GB model (\$399; 4.1 x 2.4 x 0.75). Both feature 2-inch LCDs and come with earbuds, a USB 2.0 cable, and a USB power adapter.

To get photos on your iPod, you'll need the iPod Camera Connector (\$29),

which works only with iPods with color displays. Before you buy either, check the Apple Web site (www.apple.com) to see which cameras and media readers the connector works with.

Epson P-2000. No need to squint here. The Epson P-2000 (\$499.99; www.epson.com) has a generous 3.8-inch LCD viewer and a 40GB hard drive. You can download images from your camera through supported memory card slots (CompactFlash or Secure Digital) and upload files to your desktop or notebook PC through a USB port. The built-in speaker lets you enjoy MP3 files, as well. And if you buy additional video cables, you can hook up the P-2000 to a TV or projector and show your photos and videos.

Included in the purchase price are a USB 2.0 cable, stand, battery, AC adapter, carrying case, and wrist strap. With the battery installed, the P-2000 weighs just 1 pound and is 3.3 x 5.8 x 1.2 inches.

Epson is expected to release a newer version of the P-2000 later this year, but no details had been announced at press time.

iRiver PMC & PMP Series. For the die-hard mobile multimedia enthusiast, iRiver (www.iriveramerica.com) has two enticing product lines. The 20GB PMC-120 (\$499.99) comes with Microsoft Windows Mobile, which allows you to sync this device with Windows Media Player 10. Use it to view photos or play music and videos—even TV shows you've

recorded via the WinXP Media Center Edition PC.

Weighing less than 10 ounces, the PMC-120 has a 3.5-inch color display and a TV out cable. The device also comes with a speaker, microphone, USB cable, earphones, carrying case, and a little kickstand so you can prop it up.

iRiver also sells the 20GB PMP-120 (\$449.99) and the 40GB PMP-140 (\$549.99). Both share many of the same features and accessories that the PMC-120 has, except that they don't feature the Windows software or the kickstand. However, each has a built-in FM tuner.

A third line of iRiver products, the H10 family of music players and photo viewers, is similar to the iPod and comes in sporty colors, such as

Trance Red and Remix Blue. They start at \$249.99 and range from 1GB to 20GB.

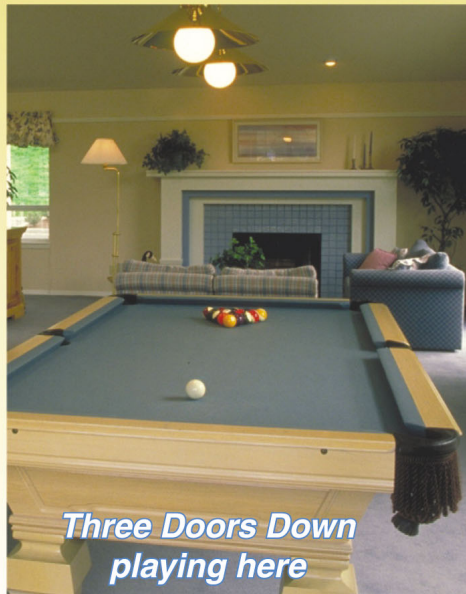
Creative Zen Portable Media Center. Like iRiver's PMC-120, the Portable Media Center (\$499.99; us.creative.com) comes with Windows Mobile installed, so you can easily sync it with all your PC's "to-go" files. You can pack up to 85 hours of video, 9,000 songs, and thousands of photos on this 20GB device and then view them on the 3.8-inch display.

The Portable Media Center weighs 12 ounces and is 3.18 x 5.67 x 1.06 inches. It comes with earphones, a USB 2.0 cable, carrying case, video and line out cable, and power adapter. ●

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playing here*



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of the Three Tenors*



*Bathing with
3 Coins in a Fountain*



SRX-3



XM-3000

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Know How

One Problem, Three Solutions

BY BRIAN HODGE

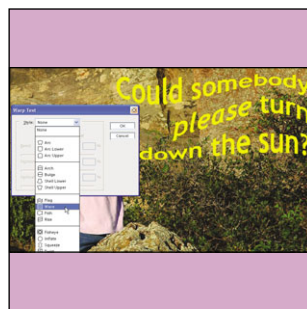


picture is worth a thousand words, so the saying goes. And most pictures stand fine on their own. But sometimes a few words

come in handy, too. Whether you want to slap a heading or caption on your photo just for fun or need to add a label or promotional information for more formal uses, all of our featured photo editors have tools that make adding text almost as simple as word processing.

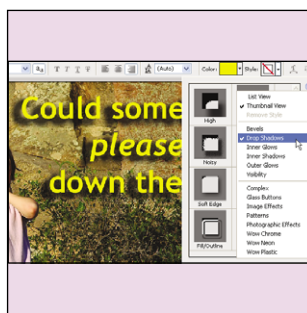
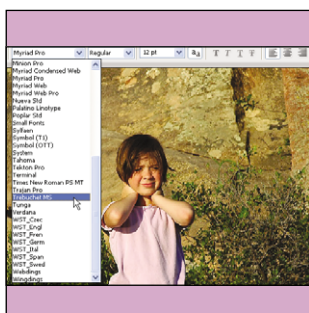
Adobe Photoshop Elements 3.0

In Standard Edit view, click the Type option in the toolbar. The default setting is for Horizontal Type, but if you click the tiny triangle in the lower-right corner, you can choose the Vertical Type Tool and other options. You can also switch to these from the Type Tool Options Bar above the photo.



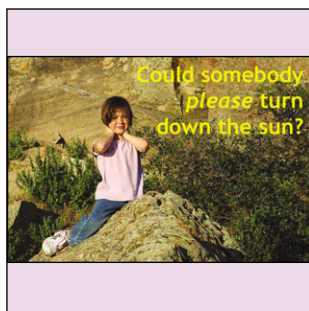
You may be happy with your text as-is, but you still have several creative options left. Near the right end of the Type Tool Options Bar, click the Create Warped Text button; in the dialog box, choose from 15 types of warps and adjust their parameters.

In the Options Bar, use the drop-down menus to make the usual word processing settings: Font, Style (bold, italic, etc.), Size, Alignment (left, right, or center), Color, and so on.



The Style Picker lets you apply additional effects to your text, such as beveled edges and drop-shadows; click the circle with the triangle to see all the options. If you don't see the Style Picker, deselect the text block by clicking elsewhere on the photo or on the toolbar's Text button again.

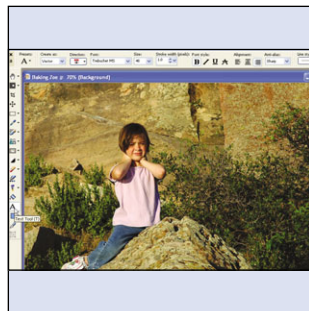
Click your image to place the cursor where you want the text to begin and then start typing. If you need to fine-tune the text's location after you're done, switch to the Move Tool at the top of the toolbar and click and drag the text box where you want it.



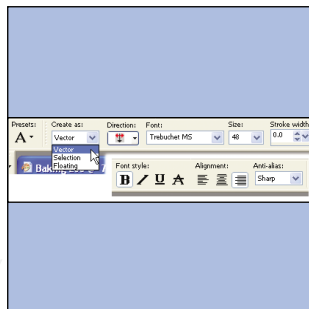
Jasc Paint Shop Pro 9

1

Select the Text Tool in the toolbar on the left side of the screen. (Paint Shop Pro has a lot of advanced text options, but we'll stick with the basics here.)

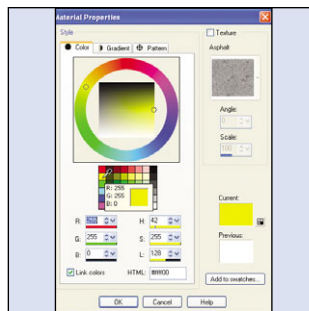


In the Tool Options palette (expand it if you can't see all the options), format your text by setting Font, Size, Direction, etc. Leave Create As on Vector; it's the easiest to edit later. For Stroke Width, values of 1 and above will give lighter text a dark outline; 0 will give you normal text with no outline.



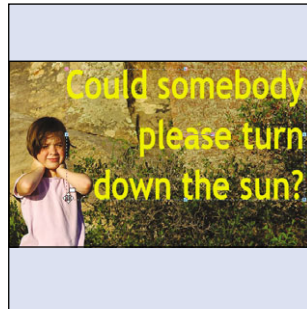
2

To set text color, go to the Materials Palette and click the Background And Fill Properties color chip. (By default, it's white.) This opens the Material Properties dialog box so you can select a color. Click OK.



Click your photo where you want to place your text. The Text Entry box opens. You'll type here but immediately see the text on your photo. When finished, click Apply.

3

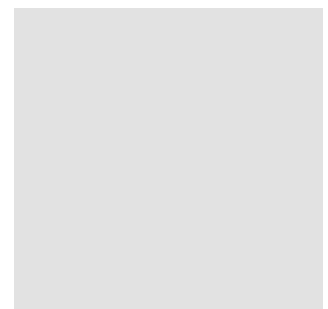
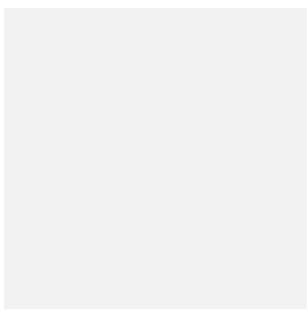
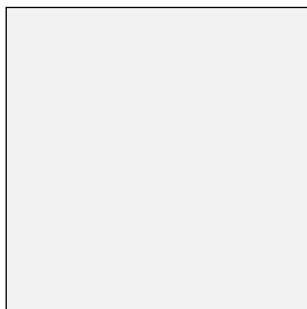


Your text appears in a bounding box with handles you can use to drag and stretch the text.

4



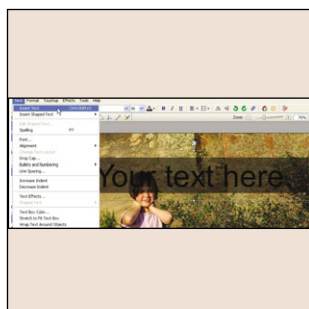
To make further changes, right-click the text and choose Edit Text from the pop-up menu. Highlight the appropriate words in the Text Entry box, make whatever editing or formatting changes are needed, and click Apply.



Microsoft Digital Image Pro 10

1

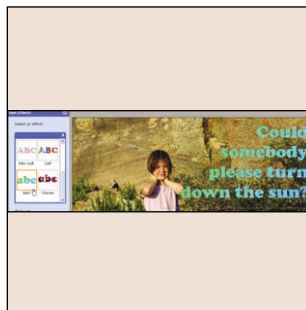
Click Text in the menu bar and select the Insert Text command. This layers a text box onto your photo.



Now you may need to resize the text box and drag it to your desired location. Just grab the text box's handles and note your cursor's appearance: A two-way arrow lets you re-size the box, and a four-way arrow lets you drag it. The round handle above the box lets you spin it to any angle.

2

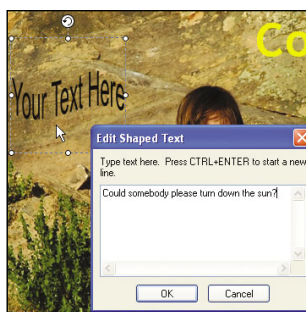
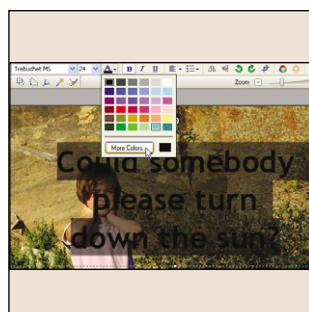
Type your text, which replaces the placeholder words. The text box will expand to fit however much you insert.



If you still want to play with your text's appearance, open the Text menu again, where you'll find such options as stretching the text and applying Text Effects from categories labeled Artistic, Textured, and Fun.

3

Select the text and format it with the toolbar's menu options and buttons: Font, Size, Color, Alignment, and so on. You can even use the Bullets And Numbers button to format a list.



For warped words, begin by choosing Insert Shaped Text from the Text menu and select from one of 30 patterns. You'll input your text in a separate entry box, but the rest of the procedure is basically the same.

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tips

Take Pictures At Night

1

Make A Night Scene

Want to get well-exposed night shots of trick-or-treaters? Many point-and-shoot cameras come with a preset mode called Night Portrait, or something similar. This mode turns on the flash (and a red-eye reduction feature) to help you properly illuminate subjects close to the camera. However, it also uses a slower shutter speed to let the sensor capture elements in the darker background—perfect for when you have access to a dramatic scene, such as a spooky moonlit cemetery. One caveat: You'll likely need to use a tripod to prevent blurry images.

2

Destroy The Demons

Your friends might dress up in devilish costumes, but even at Halloween, you don't want your camera to make their eyes look demonic due to the red-eye effect, which occurs when the subjects' pupils are dilated because they are trying to adjust to a dim setting, such as outside during the evening or in a fairly dark room. You can minimize this problem by using a red-eye reduction flash mode, but remember that for this feature to work, all of your subjects must be looking directly at the camera. In addition, you can prevent red-eye by introducing more light into the scene, causing your subjects' pupils to constrict.

3

Go With Low ISO

When you want to shoot landscapes in the moonlight, pay close attention to your camera's ISO (International Organization for Standardization) setting, which, in short, controls the image sensor's light sensitivity. When you lower the ISO setting, you reduce the sensor's sensitivity to light, meaning you'll need to use a slower shutter speed to let in enough light for a photo. Higher ISO settings let you use faster shutter speeds and reduce blurring, but they cause more graininess to appear in your images. To take the clearest photos, use an ISO speed of 200 or lower and set your camera on a tripod to eliminate blurring caused by hand movement.

4

Grab Them With Blur

At night, it's easy to add dramatic effects to your photos by making moving subjects blur while keeping other elements of your composition sharp. To do so, use a slower shutter speed and affix your camera to a tripod. When the subject enters the viewfinder, release the shutter and review your results. Then increase the shutter speed to decrease the blurring effect or use a slower speed for more blur. To prevent your fingers from wiggling the camera while taking the shot (causing blur in stationary objects), use a remote shutter release or the camera's self-timer.

5

Focus Your Test Shots

Your camera's autofocus system might not work very well when it doesn't have well-defined subjects to target, so make sure you know how to use the manual focus capabilities. To do this with most point-and-shoot models, you have to turn off the autofocus and then use one or two control buttons to adjust the focus on your own. After you take a couple of test shots, use the playback mode and zoom in on your images to make sure they're sharp.



BY NATHAN CHANDLER

Gift Of The Month

TracFone Prepaid Wireless Cell Phone



Some days she's a child, other days she's an adult, and most of the time she's a little bit of each. It's tough to be a preteen. And it's a tough time for parents, too, as power struggles become the norm. Of course you want her to have fun, but you also want to keep her safe.

Parents of preteens run into this dilemma each time Halloween rolls around. Your little girl was so sweet a few years ago when you walked from house to house with your adorable fairy princess, or butterfly, or winged angel. But now she's planning on wearing a costume that you might not find quite so cute. (Yes, it could even be downright ugly!) And forget about escorting her; she'd much rather go trick-or-treating with her friends.


Although she may be out on her own this year, she doesn't have to be out of touch. October's Gift Of The Month (each month, we'll feature a different consumer electronics device or accessory for under \$50) will help you establish a safety line between yourself and your child faster than you can say "hobgoblin." A prepaid cell phone is the ideal gift for a daughter (or son, niece, or other beloved child—with parents' approval, of course) who is beginning to venture out on her own.

TracFone (www.tracfone.com) is a nationwide prepaid wireless plan that lets you purchase a cell phone and airtime minutes, sometimes for about the cost of several large bags of Halloween candy. You can give that phone to your child, and you'll have peace of mind when she is out trick or treating after dark or in someone else's neighborhood.

Here's how it works. You purchase the phone, which comes with a battery and

a charger, and activate it. You don't have to pay an activation fee, sign a long-term contract, or go through a credit check. The initial cost includes a predetermined number of cell phone minutes, which varies according to which method you choose to activate the cell phone (through the Web site or over the phone). For example, one \$34.99 plan includes 20 starter minutes on a Nokia 1100, and the Motorola C155 has 20 minutes of starter airtime for \$59.99. (Airtime plans and cell phone offers change on occasion, and sometimes the company runs special promotions, so be sure to check the Web site for the latest deals.)

Cell phones have a variety of features, such as caller ID, voicemail, and text messaging. If your child's minutes are running out (the phone displays her remaining balance), you can buy an airtime card to add talk time to the phone. This card has a PIN that determines how much airtime you bought. You need to activate a new airtime card every 60 or 365 days, depending on the card denomination, to keep your cell phone account active. And if you add airtime before the due date displayed on your phone, you can keep the same cell phone number.

Adding minutes as you use them means that you won't have to keep your eye on the mailbox for a monthly bill. This is just as well, because during this time of year, it might end up covered with shaving cream. 

BY HEIDI V. ANDERSON

Safe & Sound

Use CE Devices To Keep You & Your Family Safe



As we move further into the 21st century, we surround ourselves with more and more technology. Our homes can contain state-of-the-art sound systems, ovens that start dinner while we're still sitting in traffic, and closets that can dry clean our clothes. We fall in love

with our favorite devices for their time-saving, entertaining, and/or practical sides, but can they also protect us from danger—or save us once we're in it?

Mobile Phones

Many of us invested in our first mobile phone (or the phones we gave our spouses or children) at least in part because we thought it would help keep us safe; in the event of a car breakdown, a traffic accident, or a walk in an isolated area at night, we want to be able to call for help.

The mobile phone, however, is a fickle savior. Anyone who has ever reached for her mobile only to discover it's out of power or out of range knows all too well how frustratingly useless a cell phone can become. On the other hand, in the days following the tragic tsunami disaster last December, thousands of travelers were located and saved using cell phone tracking and triangulation and SMS (Short Message Service, also known as text messaging) technology. The moral of the story? Remember your Girl Scout motto: "Be prepared." Before you buy a cell phone and commit to a carrier for yourself, your business, or your

Home Security & Monitoring

You don't have to be Melinda Gates to afford some high-tech home security and monitoring. There are several affordable options available to you. Among them, the Eaton Home Heartbeat Starter Pack system (\$149; www.homeheartbeat.com), which was available for preorder at press time. It keeps you wirelessly updated about the state of affairs at home, alerting you via email or text message to an emergency, such as a break-in, as well as reminding you about basic things, such as when it's time to take out the trash. It can even take some actions for you, such as turning off the water main, if it detects a major problem. You don't have to have a computer to manage it. Instead, you install a base station and several small, wireless devices around your house and then carry around a cell-phone-sized Home Key, which will receive messages from the home monitoring system. ●

Record Kids To DVD

The NCMEC (National Center for Missing & Exploited Children; www.missingkids.com) strongly recommends that parents record their child talking, giving vital information about themselves on video or DVD.

"If a child is abducted or becomes missing for any reason, the National Center, along with law enforcement, can utilize the DVD with the child's image and other descriptive information to help get the search started immediately," says Ernie Allen, president and CEO of NCMEC.

To record directly to DVD, try Sony's DCR-DVD7 DVD Handycam Camcorder (\$699; www.sonystyle.com). To convert video to DVD, the Philips DVDR 520H (\$499; www.dvdrecorder.philips.com) is an excellent choice. Making an annual record of your home, car, and other property is also a wise idea. ●

family, shop around—not just for the best deal or fanciest camera phone, but for the things that matter most in an emergency: best coverage area, battery life, and wireless e911 service. Most major carriers offer easy-to-find coverage maps at their Web sites, and the National Emergency Number Association (a national 911 resource organization) has an interactive map at its Web site (www.nena9-1-1.org), which will tell you whether wireless e911 has been implemented in your area.

If you or someone in your family is planning to travel abroad, it's important to be aware that not all American cell phones will work in other countries and not all carriers offer global roaming.

When choosing a phone for use internationally, there are a few extra essentials to consider.

First, you need to choose your technology. There are three kinds of cell phone networks to choose from: GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications), CDMA (Code Division Multiple Access), and the lesser-known iDEN (Integrated Digital Enhanced Network). GSM is the predominant global technology and is the standard in all European countries. It's also used in much of Asia, the Middle East, Canada, Australia, and many other countries, so it's the safest bet. CDMA has less worldwide coverage, but one of its biggest markets is the United

States; if you already have a cell phone, it's likely a CDMA phone. (Verizon Wireless and SprintPCS both use CDMA technology, for instance.) You can find CDMA networks in other countries, such as Mexico, New Zealand, and China, but they are fewer and farther between than GSM networks. iDEN, a wireless technology from Motorola, is exclusive to Nextel and is only available in the United States, Canada, Israel, Mexico, and parts of Latin America.

If you decide GSM is the right technology for you, buy a tri- or quad-band phone, such as palmOne Treo 650 (www.palm.com/us), Sony Ericsson K700i (www.sonyericsson.com), or the art deco-style Nokia 7280 (www.nokia.com). GSM comes in four bands (850, 900, 1800, and 1900), some of which are more common in the United States than in other countries. Having a tri- or quad-band phone will increase your odds of having a working phone when you travel.

Next up on your world phone shopping checklist is the carrier agreement. Even if you have the right hardware, your phone won't work if your wireless carrier doesn't have a roaming agreement with an international operator in the country you plan to visit. Before buying your phone, check with the carrier to be sure they have coverage in the countries you plan to visit. Most carriers offer maps and detailed information at their Web site, as well as a list of global phones they support and sell.

Location, Location, Location

GPS (Global Positioning System) technology can both help you to find your way and help others find their way to you, which is especially helpful in an emergency. The technology uses satellites to help triangulate the location of a receiver such as your GPS-enabled

Is Your Cell Phone Safe?

Although some of us really do just keep our cell phones around for emergencies, others log hundreds of minutes a week with our handsets getting warm against our ears. Unfortunately, there is no conclusive proof yet to tell us whether cell phone radiofrequency is dangerous to adults or to children. We know that cell phones can affect internal pacemakers, and some studies have shown a link to cancer in laboratory animals, but there is no concrete scientific evidence that cell phones cause serious or long-term adverse health effects in humans. However, for a phone to pass FCC certification, that phone's maximum SAR (specific absorption rate) level must be less than 1.6W/kg (watts per kilogram). (SAR is defined as a way of measuring the quantity of RF energy that is absorbed by the body.) If you want to play it safe, choose a phone with a low SAR, such as the Motorola A630 for T-Mobile (prices vary depending on calling plans; direct.Motorola.com). It offers a low SAR (0.59) as well as a hands-free speaker and Bluetooth wireless technology so you can use a wireless earpiece to keep your handset away from your head without the encumbrance of a cord. ●

phone, PDA, or other GPS-enabled electronic device.

If you tend to get lost while driving (or if your spouse is the type who refuses to ask for directions), the Pioneer AVIC-N2 In-Dash Multimedia AV Navigation System (\$2,200; www.pioneerelectronics.com) will get you where you want to go. And, if you subscribe to XM satellite radio's XM NavTraffic feature (\$3.99 with XM sub; \$9.99 for stand-alone sub; www.xmradio.com), it'll also alert you to current traffic delays, hazards, and road conditions, making your drive more safe and sound. If the Pioneer unit is beyond your budget, the Garmin C330 GPS Guide (\$964.27; www.garmin.com) is an excellent, more affordable in-car solution.

For sporty or outdoorsy types who prefer to move on foot or bike, a handheld GPS unit can keep you from getting lost in the woods (or in the wilds of unfamiliar cities). Thales Navigation's Magellan line of eXplorist GPSes (www.magellangps.com) offers a range of durable, handheld units for use both here and in Europe.

Partly in response to the events of Sept. 11, 2001, the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) has issued a requirement that by the end of this year all cell phone carriers must be able to trace cell phone calls to within 100 meters or less. In order to comply, most carriers are building GPS capabilities into their handsets, so it's possible that you already have a GPS-enabled cell phone; if you don't, it's likely that you'll have one soon.

The GPS technology used by most cell phones, however, is not quite the same as what you use with your handheld or in-car GPS receiver. Most cell phones don't let users directly access GPS data, so your phone won't necessarily help you when you're lost or help others find you. Accurate location determination requires the assistance of your carrier's network, and the location data is generally only recorded if you make an emergency call or if a third-party LBS (location-based service) provider is involved. To protect yourself, it's important to know and understand your phone and its features and to what extent GPS can help you

before you find yourself, or someone you love, stranded.

If you want to use your phone to track people (a delinquent teenager, a lost child, friends in a crowded venue), there are child locator and tracking services (LBSes) available with some phones and some carriers. Keep in mind, however, that because the phone picks up GPS signals from satellites, it isn't likely to get positions while you're indoors, underground, or in tunnels, and if your cell phone is turned off, out of range, or discarded, it won't be of any help at all.

To take advantage of an LBS, which will let you track phone locations, you must have a fully GPS-enabled phone, such as the Motorola i730 (\$99; www.nextel.com), and then sign up with a child locator or tracking service. (For some LBS options, see the "Child Locator & Tracking Services" sidebar.)

Keep Kids Safe

Every parent dreads the terrible thought of losing a child. The Angel Alert Child Distance Monitor (\$39.99; www.angelalert.net) and ionKids (\$219.95; www.ion-kids.com) are electronic devices designed to sound an alarm when a child wanders off. Angel Alert consists of two inelegant plastic devices, each about the size and thickness of two matchbooks stacked together. Attach the devices to loose lanyards and a parent and child can wear them around their necks—like necklaces. An alarm sounds if the child's unit moves beyond a certain distance from the adult's unit. Because the child's device is not secured to her in any way, a mischievous child or dangerous adult could easily remove the device before the alarm sounds. It includes a panic button, and can, under the right circumstances, help keep kids close or draw attention to a child who is being taken away, so Angel Alert falls into the "better-than-nothing" category.


ionKids works on a similar principle, but it takes a more sophisticated approach. The adult carries a base unit, which is about the size of a television's remote control and features a small window at the top where parents can access a variety of not-very-intuitive controls. The biggest advantages of ionKids are that the base unit alerts a mother when her child has moved beyond the set limit and helps her to find her child. The child's unit is a watch-like device that is difficult to remove without the tiny key. In fact, the only way to remove it without the key is to cut through the thick, plastic band. This prevents a child or abductor from quickly or easily removing the device, but on the other hand, if a parent loses the key, which is stored precariously on the exterior of the base unit, her child may be stuck wearing the wrist tag for quite some time. The device is marketed specifically to parents of children with autism or Down's Syndrome, but any parent can buy one for her child.

The Safety Turtle Alarm System (\$149.99; www.safetysafeturtle.com) also



uses a wrist unit (for the child) and base unit—in this case, to protect children (or pets) from drowning. If a child wearing a wristband falls into fresh water within 100 feet of the base unit, a loud alarm sounds. There is also a commercial version, which sounds an alarm up to 1,500 feet away. Unfortunately, The Safety Turtle only works in fresh water so for trips to the beach you'll have to find another safety net.

The list of gadgets that can help protect us and our families from the onslaught

of life's big and little dangers seems almost limitless. Gadgets and prices range from small things with big impacts, such as the Brookstone Digital Alcohol Detector (\$50; www.brookstone.com), which can tell you in seconds if your blood alcohol content is above the legal limit, to big things, such as EPLBs (emergency personal locator beacons; \$1,200 and up), which are GPS devices that you must register with the NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). These devices which are intended for serious backcountry expeditions, can be pinpointed to within 200 feet. If you trigger the alarm, it will alert the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center at Langley Air Force Base to come to your rescue. There's no way to avoid every peril in life, but if you have a concern, be it child safety, travel safety, or anything else, chances are there's a CE gadget out there that'll work for you. 

BY NAOMI GRAYCHASE

Child Locator & Tracking Services

Name	Cost	Carriers/Phones	URL
AccuTracking	Free	Nextel/Motorola	www.accutracking.com
uLocate	Free trial; \$12.95/month	Nextel/Motorola Benefon/ T-Mobile, AT&T, Cingular	www.ulocate.com
Mobile Locator	\$15 to \$20/month	Nextel/Motorola	www.nextel.com/en/services/gps/mobile_locator.shtml
Trimble Outdoors	\$20 (one-time fee)	Nextel/Motorola	www.trimbleoutdoors.com
Mapquest Find Me	\$3.99/month (first month free)	Nextel/Motorola	mapquestfindme.com

Donate A Phone, Save A Life

Cell Phones Benefit Domestic Violence Victims



S

he was still scared. Her husband had routinely threatened her safety. Although she had made the difficult choice to leave him, it wasn't easy to rebuild her life. She was successful at finding a safe, secure place to live in her southern community, and then she found a job she enjoyed and was good at. But the 46-year-old suspected her husband had learned where she worked, and she was afraid he would harm her again.

Now she was struggling with another decision, this one concerning whether she should quit this job or continue working there and risk putting herself and possibly her new friends and colleagues in harm's way. She finally decided to stay because of a key part of her new safety plan: a donated 911-capable cell phone. While fortunately she has never had to call for help, the knowledge that aid and protection were only a phone call away helped her get up in the morning and go to a job she needed.

Victims aren't the only ones who feel powerless in the face of domestic violence. Many of us want to help, but

Start Your Own Collection

If you would like to encourage others to donate their used cell phones, one of the best ways to do so is to start your own cell phone collection drive. The Body Shop offers a unique collection kit that shows you how to start a collection through your book club, mother's group, or other community organization. Visit a local The Body Shop store to pick up a kit or visit its Web site (www.thebodyshop.com/bodyshop/global/content.jsp?page=cellphone) to download the customizable poster, Q&A sheet, shipping label, and other materials. ●

Help Others In Need

Organizations that work to prevent domestic violence aren't the only groups that benefit from cell phone donations. If you'd like to aid another type of organization, consider the following charities:

- **The American Red Cross Armed Forces Emergency Services** (www.redcross.org). Since May 2003, Nextel has contributed approximately \$1 million to this program for facilitating emergency communications to the U.S. military and their families. You can help this cause by donating your phone at any Nextel store.
- **Easter Seals** (www.easterseals.com). Easter Seals has helped individuals with disabilities and special needs and their families for more than eight decades. To make a donation, drop off your phone at a nearby Sprint store or Easter Seals office.
- **The American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund** (www.redcross.org/services/disaster). T-Mobile's Get More, Give More program contributes all its funds to supporting hurricane relief efforts in Florida and other places. Bring your phone into a T-Mobile retail store or visit its Web site (www.t-mobile.com/company/recycling) for an address where you can send your phone. ●

we don't know how we can most effectively improve these victims' lives.

Contrary to what many believe, it doesn't take donating large sums of money or volunteering during the little spare time you have to benefit victims around the country. Helping someone communicate if they are in trouble could be just what a victim needs. "One of the first things a perpetrator does is pull the phone out of the wall, so the person can't contact authorities," says Amanda Turek, community specialist for the YWCA WINGS program in San Gabriel Valley, Calif. By donating a cell phone to a domestic

violence program, you can make a major difference in someone's life.

How The Programs Work

When you donate a used cell phone, the phone may be refurbished and redistributed directly to domestic violence victims. This is one of the purposes of The Wireless Foundation's Call To Protect campaign. The foundation, through its partners or via its Web site (www.wirelessfoundation.org), collects used cell phones and accessories and turns them over to ReCellular (www.wirelessrecycling.com), a company that determines

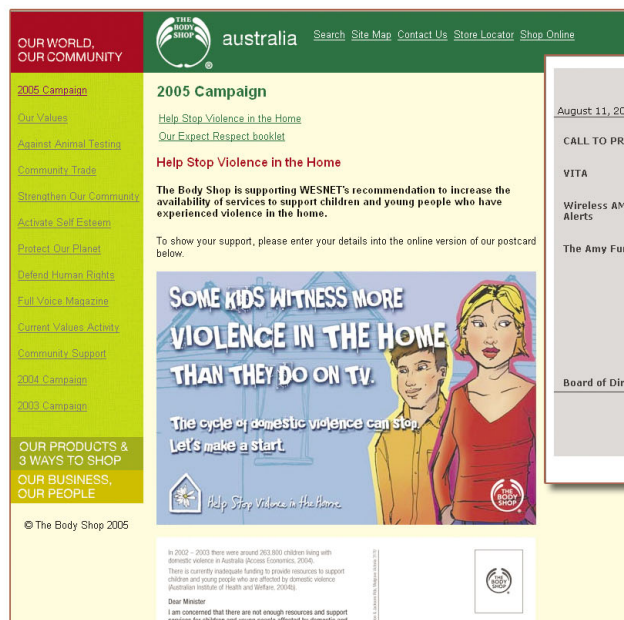
whether the phones should be resold, recycled, or refurbished. If they are refurbished, phones are returned to The Wireless Foundation or its partners with all personal data eliminated, and the phones are donated to local shelters. The shelters then determine to whom they will distribute the phones.

Every wireless phone has the ability to dial 911, thanks to the FCC's (Federal Communications Commission) requirement that all carriers allow free access to a 911 call, so recipients are assured of a crucial lifeline. The victims' phones aren't assigned a phone number through which someone could harass a victim; they only let victims dial out, and the cost of calling 911 is borne by members of the CTIA (Cellular Telecommunications & Internet Association).

In addition, specific carriers sometimes donate a limited number of minutes to each phone. The shelters then preprogram only approved numbers, such as the local shelter's number, into the cell phone's contact list. If a victim needs to contact the shelter in an emergency, she can quickly dial for help.

Your cell phone donation can also benefit domestic violence victims in a less obvious but just as important way. Some organizations sell collected cell phones and use the proceeds to fund programs that help in the prevention, awareness, and treatment of domestic violence.

Verizon's Hopeline program (www.verizonwireless.com/b2c/aboutUs/communityservice/hopeline.jsp) collects wireless phones and accessories from any service provider, not just Verizon, and then ReCellular refurbishes or recycles the phones. The phones are then sold, and Hopeline uses the proceeds to buy other phones for victims or provide funding to organizations including the Family Violence Prevention Fund, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and local interest groups.



One priority for both The Body Shop and The Wireless Foundation is to help protect families from violence. You can find information about their programs on their Web sites.

Protect The Environment

When you donate a cell phone to a domestic violence program, you are doing more than helping others in need. You are also helping to keep the planet clean. Cell phones that might otherwise end up in landfills can now be either recycled or put into the hands of those who can benefit from them. ReCellular, according to its Web site, claims to be “the largest recycler and reseller of used wireless phones and accessories in the wireless industry” and collected more than 3 million cell phones in 2004. However, given that millions of cell phones are thrown away each year, we still have a ways to go toward keeping all of these electronic devices from being wasted and polluting the earth. ●

By the end of last year, Hopeline had donated more than \$1 million to organizations that work toward the education and prevention of domestic violence. And overall contributions (monetary and otherwise) to Hopeline totaled more than \$3.7 million in 2003 alone.

Another program, Corporate Alliance To End Partner Violence (www.caepv.org), works with employers to create programs that protect domestic violence victims. If a victim is employed by a company that participates in these programs, the company might not only provide the employee with a cell phone, but it might also offer the victim flexible leave time, inform security guards of any potential perpetrators, and make sure the company's premises are listed on restraining orders.

You Can Contribute

It's simple to help; all you need to do is discontinue your cell phone service, walk into a participating organization's outlet, and hand over your cell phone and (in most cases) any of its accessories, including chargers and batteries. Most of the major cell phone carriers offer cell phone donation programs, including

Sprint's Project Connect and T-Mobile's Get More, Give More. Some of these programs contribute money directly to domestic violence programs, while others benefit other charities. (See the “Help Others In Need” sidebar.) You can contact your carrier or visit its Web site for more information or mail your cell phone to a program like Call To Protect.

In addition, there are numerous programs nationwide run by local chapters of the YWCA (www.ywca.org) and other groups. For example, The Body Shop (www.thebodyshop.com) runs a national campaign, Stop Violence In The Home. Each of The Body Shop's stores has partnered with a local family violence shelter, and the company expects to meet its goal of 100,000 collected phones by the end of this summer.


Once you find a program that you would like to support, you're well on your way toward helping a grateful friend, neighbor, or stranger escape the scourge of domestic violence. Your contribution may seem small on the surface, but you could end up saving a life. ☐

BY HEIDI V. ANDERSON

For the most authentic
movie experience...



put your speakers
behind ClearPix™



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John Dahl THX Ltd.

No screen we've tested to date matches the acoustical transparency of the Screen Research ClearPix2 fabric. Now more home theater enthusiasts will be able to enjoy the benefits of proper behind-the-screen placement of the center loudspeaker, with no degradation of audio or video performance.



Joel Silver ISF

We welcome Screen Research to an elite group of color scientists who boldly engineer screens with a focus on Home Theater! The folks at Screen Research should be complimented for supplying a screen that has not compromised acoustic transparency or sacrificed visual accuracy for gain – something that is increasingly rare these days.

Exclusive No. American Distributor:



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Do you know that most movie sound – and not just dialogue – plays through the center speaker?

Thanks to ClearPix™ by Screen Research, now you can put this most critical speaker in the right place - **behind the screen and at the same height as the left and right speakers.**

Although common “perforated” screens allow sound through, they cause audio problems (comb filtering) and suffer from visual distortions (moiré) when used with today’s digital projectors. As a result, installers resort to solid screens and reluctantly place the center speaker above or below the screen – a fundamental no-no.

Problem solved: The revolutionary ClearPix screen passes full-frequency sound and does not cause moiré.

Screen Research offers a complete line of fixed and motorized screens as well as professional-grade masking systems. When you want the most out of your home theater system, insist on ClearPix by Screen Research.

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Community Alert

Prevent ID Theft At Home



Few of our lives are as well-ordered and organized as we would like. Junk mail accumulates in a pile on the breakfast bar; outdated magazines form a tilting mountain on the coffee table; and receipts, bank statements, and pay stubs await filing in a shoe box on the desk. You don't normally associate a lack of organization with identity theft, but all of that clutter contains personal information a potential ID thief could use to make charges on existing credit accounts or open new accounts in your name.

Almost daily you hear of the thieves who've cracked databases at banks, credit agencies, and universities and stolen thousands of names and SSNs. Those data thefts are chilling, and what's worse, they are situations over which you have no control. You personally can't ensure the security of your bank's database. You have rights if you're victimized by one of these mass crackings, and we'll get to those later, but here we'll focus primarily on what you can do around your house to protect yourself.

The Practical Approach

First, keep track of the information on your credit reports. Obtain free copies once a year from each of the three consumer reporting

What To Do If Your ID Has Been Stolen

If you find that someone has opened a checking account in your name or you're notified that someone has stolen your SSN or in any way compromised your identity, the FTC (Federal Trade Commission; www.ftc.gov) recommends that you immediately take the following steps.

1. Contact any or all of the big three credit agencies to place an Initial Fraud Alert on your record. The agency you contact must then notify the other two. An Initial Fraud Alert places a warning on your accounts and prevents anyone from opening new credit accounts using your name and personal information for 90 days. During this time, creditors will have to verify your identity, too, in order to protect you, and you will experience delays when you apply for any kind of credit (a car loan or instant, in-store credit at The Home Depot, for instance). For longer protection you can file an Extended Fraud Victim Alert, which helps protect you for seven years.
2. Contact your local police, make a report, and obtain copies of the report to file with the ID Theft Affidavit (next step).
3. Close all accounts you didn't open (and any you suspect someone has made unauthorized charges to) and dispute the accounts and/or charges. To dispute them, you must file an ID Theft Affidavit, and you'll find the form at the FTC's ID Theft page (www.consumer.gov/idtheft). Scroll down the Hot Links box on the left side and click the link for ID Theft Affidavit. The form is seven pages long, and you'll need detailed personal information to complete it. You'll need to print out the form and send copies of it to all companies (banks, retail stores, utilities) you believe have opened an account with stolen information or allowed charges you did not authorize.
4. File a separate complaint with the FTC. Do not send the FTC a copy of the affidavit. Instead, fill out and submit the detailed, online complaint form. The form is on an SSL (Secure Sockets Layer)-encrypted site, so your information won't be compromised.

agencies: Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. (See the "Won't Get Fooled Again" sidebar for more information.) If you see accounts you didn't open or charges on accounts that you didn't make, act immediately by following the steps in the "What To Do If Your ID Has Been Stolen" sidebar.

It is also important to safeguard your personal information at home. We are not encouraging you to be suspicious of everyone, but think about all of the

traffic in your home and be aware of the potential threat: The cleaning service comes once a week, and you always see different faces; an electrician recently rewired your basement, and he had an assistant you've never seen; your cousin brought a new boyfriend when she came for dinner; and your roommate invited a group from her office to watch a movie.

Identity theft is a crime of opportunity. If one of those people snagged a

bank or credit card statement from the shoe box on your desk, he could conceivably use your credit accounts or take money from your bank accounts.

Home Shredding Tips

Stay on top of junk mail and receipts so you won't be victimized by your own clutter. You know those copious instant-credit offers that arrive daily in the mail? They represent an opportunity for any would-be thief. The documents say you are preapproved for credit, and your name and address are printed on the forms. Don't just toss those in the trash. Instead, invest in a paper shredder and shred all mail with sensitive information.

You can find paper shredders online and at traditional retail office supply, electronics, and even department stores. The Royal Business Machines Paper Shredder (\$49.99) crosscuts 10 sheets at a time, and you can find it at Target and Circuit City, among others. Fellowes (www.fellowes.com) features a line of home strip-shredders starting at \$29.99. Look for the P-5 or the P-5+ at TigerDirect.com, in addition to retail stores, such as Wal-Mart. You will also find Fellowes' high-security confetti shredders, such as the PS60-2 Paper Shredder with Basket (\$149.95) online at Amazon.com, Dell (www.dell.com), and OfficeMax (www.officemax.com).

Paul Holstein, who runs LifeOrganizers.com, a Web site devoted to decluttering your home, office, and life, recommends shredding all records with your personal information on them. For instance, he says, your bank keeps copies of your statements; once you have reconciled a statement, shred it and get a copy from your bank if you need it. Holstein says the only time you

may need the stubs from utility payments is to establish residency for voter registration or a driver's license (check with your local county offices for how many months' worth). If you already have a voter registration card and a driver's license, and you can't deduct utilities on your taxes, shred those stubs and receipts, as well.

Before putting pay stubs, receipts, bank statements, credit card applications, or tax returns (in general, you should hold onto your tax returns for seven years) in the trash or your recycling bin, shred them. Also, peel the address label off of your magazines before you give them to friends or recycle them.

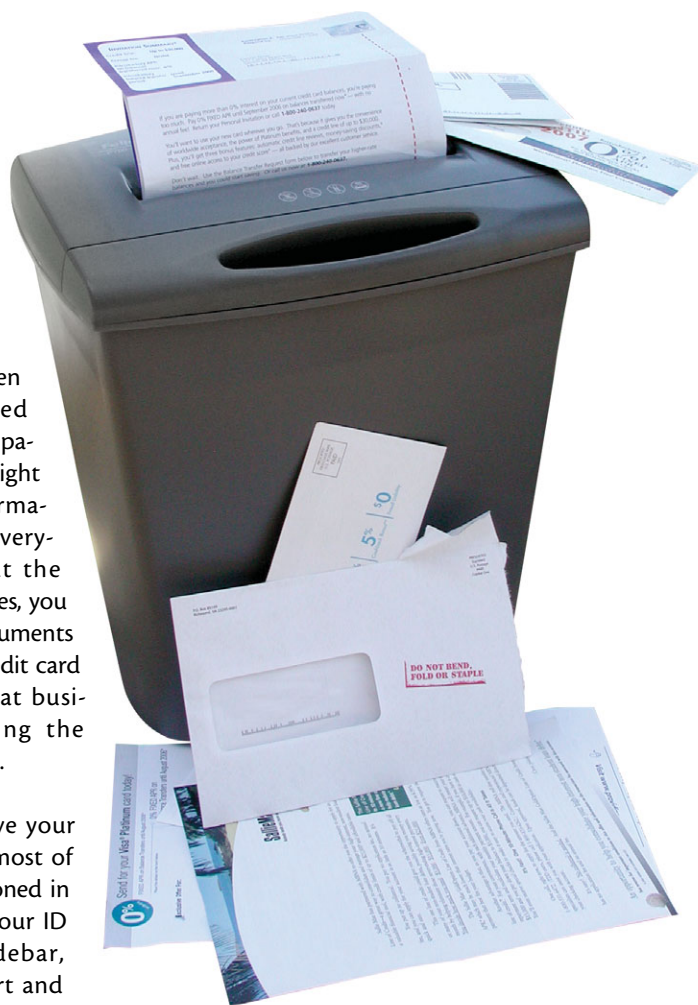
To save a few trees (and yourself the hassle of daily sorts and shreds), opt out of credit-related junk mail for two years. Call the Credit Bureau's Opt-Out Line: (888) 567-8688. For more information, visit the Fight Identity Theft Web site (www.fightidentitytheft.com/junkmail.html) for

steps you can take to stem the tide of junk mail.

Your Rights

If your identity has been stolen and you've filed the reams of necessary paperwork, you have a right to quite a bit of information. In addition to everything in your files at the credit reporting agencies, you have a right to the documents (bad checks, forged credit card applications, etc.) that businesses have regarding the fraudulent transactions.

You will have to prove your identity and provide most of the documents mentioned in the "What To Do If Your ID Has Been Stolen" sidebar, such as a police report and



Contact Info For The Big 3

Use the following phone numbers to place a fraud alert on your record. When you contact one agency, it is required to contact the other two; however, you may certainly contact all three yourself.

Equifax
(800) 525-6285
www.equifax.com

Experian
(888) 397-3742
www.experian.com


TransUnion
(800) 680-7289
www.transunion.com

Won't Get Fooled Again

A 2003 amendment to the federal FCRA (Fair Credit Reporting Act) stipulates that you may obtain a free copy of your credit report from each of the three reporting agencies once a year. The only place to sign up for your free report is at www.AnnualCreditReport.com (or call 877/322-8228). You will see numerous offers purporting to be free, but [AnnualCreditReport.com](http://www.AnnualCreditReport.com), created by Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion, is the only place to get your free report. ●

an ID Theft Affidavit. Debt collectors have to give you the name of the creditor and the amount of the debt. And under certain circumstances, you may ask a consumer credit reporting agency to block the information regarding the bad debts (as you are sorting them out) so the debt may not be sold, transferred, or sent to a collections agency. Finally, you may ask businesses not to report the bad debt (the debt from the fraudulent transactions) to the consumer reporting credit agencies, assuming you spot the fraud before it appears on your credit report.

Eternal Vigilance

Cut down on clutter, store what financial records you need securely out of sight, and check your credit reports several times a year to protect your identity from theft. 

BY KATHRYN DOLAN

"When paired with a suitably high-end A/V receiver, the RBH CT-MAX will rock your home theater to its foundations."

- Steve Guttenberg, *c|net.com*

In either stereo or multichannel modes, the RBH excelled at producing a cleanly defined soundstage, with imaging uncluttered by any hint of a box or multiple drivers...The result is that the Compact Theater convincingly disappears as a sound source.

-Neil Gader, *The Perfect Vision Magazine*



MS-8.1

With its die-cast aluminum construction and aluminum woofers, the RBH CT-MAX delivers "foundation rocking" performance, yet won't rock your budget to its foundations.

RBH's Compact Theater systems offer the unparalleled value and incomparable attention to detail which have come to be expected from RBH.

The CT-Max is also available with the MS-10.1, featuring dual 10-inch active woofers, RBH's TAV™ technology and a 250-Watt RMS built in amplifier.



**Redefining the way
you experience sound.™**

tips

Use CE On Your Daily Commute

1

Know The World Around You

Finding time to read the newspaper or watch the nightly news so you know what's going on in the world can seem almost impossible for someone with a busy lifestyle. This can be especially frustrating if a recent headline affects your job and you need to be up-to-date at all times. During your commute, download recent news stories and radio shows to your MP3 player via a service such as Audible (www.audible.com) or use your MP3 player's radio tuner so that you can listen to the latest information while you ride the train or bus into the city. Or, if audio isn't your preference, read the most up-to-date news through the Internet connection on your PDA or cell phone.

2

Go Surfing

Anyone with an Internet-compatible phone can tell you how handy it is to be able to surf the Web on the go. With this access, you can take time during your commute to check your personal email, learn more about a new client, find a recipe for dinner, or even go shopping for the perfect anniversary gift that you need in a couple of weeks. You can even use some cell phones as a wireless modem for your laptop, giving you the convenience of having an Internet connection without needing a wireless hotspot.

3

Warm Up & Cool Down

On your way to work, do a mental warm-up for the day ahead: Check your PDA for the day's tasks and appointments or review that afternoon's presentation on your laptop. If the only time you have to yourself after work is during your commute home, then it's especially important to use that time to separate yourself from the day's work. Play a game on your laptop or cell phone, listen to music on your MP3 player, or watch part of a movie on your portable DVD player. This will help you arrive home in good spirits, ready for the activities ahead.

4

Chit Chat

Talking on the phone is a great way to stay connected while on the road. Be careful, however, as using cell phones behind the wheel can be dangerous, and some communities have banned the use of cell phones while driving or enacted legislation that requires you to use a hands-free headset when driving. Either way, using your travel time to make phone calls to the office or to organize your child's schedule will give you more time at work and home to focus on other priorities. However, always keep in mind that other people can hear your conversation, so be careful not to give away too much personal information, such as Social Security numbers or bank account information. Also, always be considerate of those around you when chatting on the phone—no one likes to be seated next to an annoying chatterbox on the subway.

5

Be Well Read

Many businesspeople stress that if someone wants to rise to the top, she needs to keep current on the latest best-selling books, especially when they pertain to business. After all, no one wants to be in the dark at a cocktail party when your colleagues are talking about their views on "The DaVinci Code." During your commute is a great time to catch up on that much-needed reading. Consider uploading audio versions of books to your MP3 player or PDA or burning them to a CD to take advantage of your travel time.



BY JENNIFER JOHNSON

On such a nice day,
don't you want to go outside and play?



Boston Acoustics Voyager® Speakers and Subwoofers —
designed to bring The Boston Sound™ to the great outdoors.

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technology
for your
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Lifestyles™

First Glimpse Advertising Section

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Yamaha YSP-1 Digital Sound Projector

MSRP: \$1,499

www.yamaha.com

Home Theater Made Simple

Yamaha's YSP-1 Digital Sound Projector will blend in seamlessly with your home theater décor, and it backs up its good looks with substance. Although it is only one component, there are 42 speaker drivers inside that project precisely focused beams of sound aimed for optimum surround-sound effect.

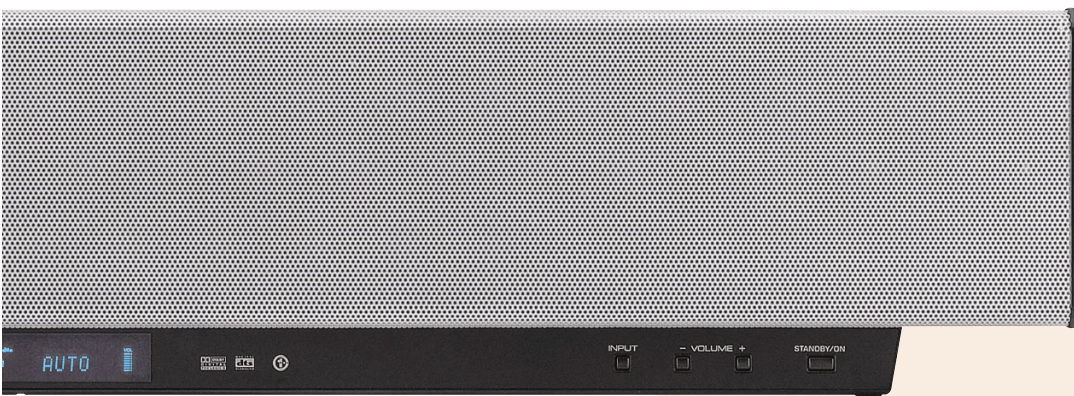
Easy To Set Up

Setting up the YSP-1 Digital Sound Projector is easier than other conventional home theater systems because you won't have to mess with multiple speakers and wiring. You can place it in several areas of the room (including the front center or

either front corner of the room), so it will blend in with your existing furniture and accessories. If you have a flat-panel TV, you can also wall- or table-mount it or place it next to (or on top of) your video display.

An Easy Blend

It's not just about how it sounds—it's also about style and how well it complements a wall or stand-mounted plasma, LCD, or rear-projection TV. With its slim, contemporary design, it's an elegant statement of the latest in home theater technology. And, because it can be used as an on-wall system, you can take the YSP-1 Digital Sound Projector with you if



you move to another home, which is important in such an investment.

Multi-Channel Surround Sound From A Single Component

The YSP-1 Digital Sound Projector uses multiple small speakers, each with its own digital amplifier and innovative projection technology to control the orientation of the sound. By focusing the sound into beams and controlling the speaker delay times, the listener perceives the sounds to be coming from additional speakers placed throughout the room, when in fact there is only one device: the YSP-1 Digital Sound Projector.

Projecting & Reflecting Sound Beams

The time delay of each speaker driver is controlled by a Digital Sound Projection circuit, enabling the system to project beams of sound which are precisely aimed for optimum surround sound effect. The direct and reflected sound waves produce true multichannel surround sound with only one device.



YAMAHA

first glimpse

Advertisement

Fujitsu P50XHA40US Plasmavision 50-Inch Plasma Display
MSRP: \$7,499
www.plasmavision.com



A Picture Worth A Thousand Words

Introducing the Fujitsu P50XHA40US Plasmavision Display TV. As part of Fujitsu's latest line of high-definition Plasmavision monitors, the P50XHA40US provides the ultimate viewing experience. This next-generation line of plasma displays debuts the critically acclaimed AVM-II (Advanced Video Movement-II) digital video processor, which further enhances the award-winning picture quality of Plasmavision displays. Simple installation and seamless integration into any home theater setting is achieved through a redesigned sleek and lightweight bezel and an extensive array of inputs and outputs. Superior picture quality and natural color display combine with high resolution to virtually transport you to far away places without ever leaving the comfort of your home. Whether you're watching a sporting event, your favorite television program, or the latest DVD release, images appear so real that you'll feel like you're actually there.

It's What's Inside

The AVM-II digital video processor features four distinct enhancements to the award-winning picture quality of Plasmavision monitors. AVM Noise Reduction reduces the digital noise artifacts often present in today's heavily processed (compressed or expanded) video content, and it also smoothes jagged edges.

Picture Text Optimizer recognizes on-screen text and graphics and processes them in the most optimal way. Ambient Light Sensor senses the relative brightness of the viewing room and digitally adjusts the screen brightness and contrast. Advanced Color Management adjusts specific hues to appear more natural.

Picture Perfect

The P50XHA40US boasts a HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) input, enabling true high-definition

first glimpse

Advertisement



audio/video content. HDMI combines high-definition video and multichannel audio in a single digital interface to provide crystal-clear digital quality over a single cable.

Brilliant Color Display

Using a 10-bit processing system, the P50XHA40US produces over 1.07 billion colors to represent on-screen images in their most natural color. High brightness and an amazing contrast ratio combine for a brilliant picture display, regardless of room lighting.

Sleek & Stylish

At just 3.9 inches deep and 99 pounds, the P50XHA40US is great for custom installations in a wide variety of home theater applications. Plus, it will blend in with any home's décor.

Award Winning

Since introducing the world's first plasma display monitor in 1993, Fujitsu Plasmavision Displays have won numerous awards for engineering, design, and picture quality, including an Emmy Award for outstanding achievement in technological advancement.

first glimpse

Advertisement

JVC 37-Inch Digital Cable-Ready LCD TV (LT-37X776)

MSRP: \$3499.95

www.jvc.com



Literally, A New Dimension To Home Theater

JVC's panels were not only engineered to excite the most extreme audio visual enthusiasts, but also to influence the creative minds of the most discriminating home decorators. The 37-inch LCD TV, a stylish and innovative unit, takes into consideration every feature the demanding digital customer is looking for now and for the future.

The LT-37X776 features an integrated tuner for receiving digital broadcasts, as well as an HDMI input. It also boasts a high-resolution widescreen W-XGA LCD display that delivers high brightness, a wide viewing angle, and flicker-free picture. Best of all, it comes in a sleek, elegantly designed cabinet, so it will blend in with your home's existing décor.

The 37-Inch Digital Cable Ready LCD TV includes:

- Built-in ATSC tuner and CableCARD capability, which eliminates the need for a separate set-top box, meaning less clutter in your living room
- HDMI input for a simple, one-wire digital and audio connection, as well as two IEEE 1394 inputs, so you can connect it to a video camera or other device
- A fully illuminated universal remote control for easy operation in a darkened room

first glimpse

Advertisement



The LCD TV also features JVC's fourth generation Digital Image Scaling Technology that upconverts any video source to a new 32-bit CPU dedicated to controlling picture refinement, so you'll always get the best picture possible. These proprietary technologies work together to optimize image quality, regardless of the source, and to deliver a smooth picture while enhancing vertical resolution.

Another exclusive feature of this TV is JVC's Five-Point Color Management that samples red, green, blue, yellow, and flesh tones and adjusts each separately to deliver vivid color reproduction. This set also includes JVC's HD DSD (Digital Super Detail) edge enhancement which is active on

still, fast, and slow motion areas of the picture for crisp defined edges.

All of this means that you'll be able to watch any video you choose in true-to-life color and amazing crispness with a device that is sleek and stylish.

JVC
The Perfect Experience / —

Denon S-301
MSRP: \$1,599.99 (Available August '05)
[www.denson.com](http://www.denon.com)



Easy-To-Use Home Entertainment Systems

Denon Electronics' S-301 is the world's first home entertainment product to provide simple, convenient connectivity and control of today's portable digital music devices, including the popular Apple iPods. In addition, the S-301 includes a front-panel USB port that lets users easily connect with Rio and other popular portable MP3 players, as well as USB flash memory devices. Both units provide an analog connection to all makes of portable devices via their headphone jacks.

Designed as total high-performance home-theater entertainment solutions, the new S-301 is complete and compact, featuring integrated DVD/receiver units with a stylish

remote, dual satellite speakers, and high-performance subwoofers.

Total Simplicity Of Operation, Set-Up & Connectivity

Denon designed the S-301 to fuse high-quality audio performance with elegance, ease-of-use, and advanced connectivity. For simple operation, you can access all features and functions of the systems via the remote, the front panel controls, or the intuitively designed on-screen interface.

first glimpse

Advertisement



An easy on-screen Help menu takes users through every step of the simple setup process. A component video conversion feature in both systems adds to their flexibility in multicomponent home theater system operation, letting users send signals from either composite or S-video sources directly to their display device via a single connection.

Designs Combine Form & Function

Featuring a familiar and gentle round-form design, the S-301 is designed for easy connectivity and visually pleasing

integration with today's multicomponent home entertainment systems. For full-sounding, well-balanced acoustics, the S-301 includes high-performance loudspeakers engineered and fine-tuned by top European speaker designers.

DENON

Fujitsu LPF-D711 High Definition LCD Projector

MSRP: \$24,999

www.plasmavision.com



Bring Theater Into Your Home

Introducing the LPF-D711 high-definition LCD front projector for home theater. The picture quality of this new LCD projector is among the world's best. Using three 1,920 x 1,080 true high-definition LCD panels yielding 1,200 ANSI lumens, the LPF-D711 displays sharp, bright, color-rich images for a truly cinematic experience right in the comfort of your family room. Equipped with the breakthrough AVM-II digital video processor, and with its 12-bit processing, the LPF-D711 is capable of displaying up to 68.7 billion colors. Both SD and HD content are produced at superior levels, and the LPF-D711 is one of the few projectors that will accept a true 1080p signal.

A separate supplied Selector unit, LPF-QSD1WB, houses the system's multiple audio and video inputs, including component and HDMI, keeping the LPF-D711 compact and lightweight for a seamless installation. Additionally, this revolutionary projector was designed with a home's interior in mind. The sleek, modern look easily integrates into any home theater décor.

It's What's Inside

The AVM-II digital video processor uses four distinct features to enhance the picture quality of the LPF-D711. AVM Noise Reduction reduces the digital noise artifacts often present in today's heavily processed (compressed or expanded) video content and smoothes jagged edges. Picture Text Optimizer recognizes on-screen text and graphics and processes them in the most optimal way. Advanced Color Management adjusts specific hues to appear more natural.

Brilliant Color Display

The LPF-D711 can display up to 68.7 billion colors to represent on-screen images in their most natural color. High brightness and an amazing contrast ratio combine to produce a brilliant picture display in a widescreen format to truly bring the theater experience into your home.

first glimpse

Advertisement



Convergent Visual Medium

An expanded complement of input terminals for HDMI, DVI (PC use only), component video, S-video, composite video, and analog RGB allow for complete convergence.

Picture Perfect

The LPF-D711 boasts a HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) input, enabling true high-definition audio/video content. HDMI combines high-definition video and multichannel audio in a single digital interface, accepting true 1080p signals, to provide crystal-clear digital quality over a single cable.

Sleek & Stylish

Light and compact, the LPF-D711 is great for custom installations in a wide variety of home theater applications.

Award Winning

Fujitsu has won numerous awards for engineering, design, and picture quality, including the 2002 Emmy Award for outstanding achievement in technological advancement.

FUJITSU

first glimpse

Advertisement

Kodak EasyShare P880
MSRP: \$599.99 (Available
September '05)
www.kodak.com



Professional Quality & Enhanced Creativity

The Kodak EasyShare P880 zoom digital camera brings Kodak technologies and features to serious photographers. It provides more expansive picture-taking capability with a 24-140mm (35mm equivalent) wide-angle, f/2.8 – f/4.1, professional-quality Schneider-Kreuznach Variogon zoom lens.

The 24mm-wide angle setting is ideal for landscape photography, allowing you to get closer to subjects while pulling in foreground objects with greater depth of field.

Creative photographers can also shoot with this wide perspective for unique portraiture or to capture a greater scenic expanse for later cropping.

With the same integrated lens, users can also optically zoom up to 140mm (5.8X) using the manual zoom ring for

precise framing. Achieve accurate focusing, even in low-light conditions, with the selectable 25-point, advanced, hybrid Auto Focus system or via the manual focus ring. Experience enhanced, flexible lighting control via the hot shoe flash connector, plus the PC sync port for off-camera flash options.

The P880 model offers the freedom to select multiple shooting modes, including program, aperture and shutter priorities, fully manual, and custom modes. For rapid camera adjustments, you can dial-in multiple preset scene modes or switch to automatic mode to have it done for you.

Video takes on a new dimension with the EasyShare P880 camera—a function not available in DSLRs. You can capture VGA video at 30fps with the unique ability to use full optical

first glimpse

Advertisement



zoom, and then you can trim, cut, splice, and merge clips on the camera. The P880 can even extract individual video frames as JPEGs at 640 x 480 resolution—presenting an ultra-high-speed alternative to the camera's multiple burst modes—which can then be shared and printed up to 4 x 6 inches.

For the first time, Kodak has added RAW file support to its EasyShare camera line to enable more post-capture flexibility for enthusiasts. These files allow for in-camera JPEG and TIFF extraction, as well as RAW editing within new Kodak EasyShare software v5.1. The new Kodak RAW format uniquely embeds a dynamic JPEG within the file, permitting rapid RAW file viewing and organization in the software, without requiring RAW conversion. This is excellent for archival purposes.

As with all EasyShare cameras, the P880 model is compatible with Kodak EasyShare printer docks and camera docks, the IMAGELINK print system, and PictBridge technology for direct photo output without a computer.

Kodak

first glimpse

Advertisement

Kodak EasyShare P850

MSRP: \$499.99 (Available August '05)

www.kodak.com



A Powerful Zoom & Precision Optics

The Kodak EasyShare P850 camera makes it easier than ever for amateur photographers to shoot like professionals. It features a 12X, 36mm to 432mm (35mm equivalent), image-stabilized, f2.8 – f/3.7, Schneider-Kreuznach Variogon lens to get incredibly close to a scene while maintaining detail and sharpness.

Optical image stabilization, combined with the advanced, hybrid AF system (25 selectable points), provides a two-stop advantage over non-Image Stabilized systems for better photography in low light for both still shots and video.

For instance, if a particular scene called for at least a 1/500 shutter speed to stop the action under normal circumstances, the EasyShare P850 could deliver the same effect with a much slower 1/125 shutter speed, resulting in a bright yet crisp image.

It also minimizes handheld camera shake at longer focal lengths, which is critical when not using a tripod—a scenario found on the sidelines of sporting events, on scenic hiking trails, and during everyday spontaneous picture-taking when carrying a stabilizing device is impractical.

first glimpse

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The P850 model shares many elements of the more advanced P880, including 30fps VGA video with single-frame still-extraction and trim/cut/splice/merge editing abilities. Thanks to cutting-edge Motion JPEG technology, you can record longer, TV-quality videos with sound—up to 80 continuous minutes, depending on card capacity—while using less memory storage. EasyShare Software version 5 even makes combining, rotating, and adding music to video clips a breeze. The camera's bright, high-quality LCD and EVF simplify working with, viewing, and sharing videos.

Other features include a unique hot shoe for extended lighting control; PASM and extensive preset scene modes; multiple burst modes for action shooting; a live histogram; highlight/shadow clipping displays; RAW/TIFF/JPEG support; and Li-Ion battery. It is compatible with EasyShare printer docks, the Imagelink print system, and PictBridge technology.

Kodak

first glimpse

Advertisement



iHome iH5
MSRP: \$129.95
www.ihomedirect.com

The Home System For Your iPod

Wake up to *your* music.

The new iHome iH5 lulls you to sleep and wakes you gradually with the music on your iPod. The iH5 Reson8 speakers have an incredibly rich and natural stereo sound, and the unit also includes a digital AM/FM clock radio.

And it does all this while charging your iPod, so it's ready to go when you are.

The iH5 is great in any room in the house. Try one in your kitchen or home office or during your next dinner party.

Display & Design Features:

- Clean and contemporary design complements the look of your iPod—and your home's decor

first glimpse

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- Hi-fi stereo speakers in specially designed isolated speaker chambers for excellent sound every time
- Extra-large, backlit custom LCD
- Display indicators display your clock and calendar, as well as iPod track and playlist information, radio tuning, volume level, and alarm

- Amber backlight on all primary buttons so you can see everything during a long night or early morning
- Made specifically for your iPod

iHome[™]
the home system for your iPod[®]

first glimpse

Advertisement



Garmin Forerunner 301

MSRP: \$324.98

www.garmin.com

How Hard Is Your Heart Working?

Get results in a heartbeat with the Forerunner 301. This training partner continuously monitors your heart rate, speed, distance, pace, and calories burned so you can train smarter and more effectively. The Forerunner 301 combines the popular features of the Forerunner 201 with a proven heart rate monitor and Training Center software to create a highly integrated personal training system.

Whether you are a triathlete in training or just want to see tangible results of your daily run, the Forerunner 301 sets the pace with innovative features:

- Compact, lightweight, and waterproof with an easy-to-read display on an ergonomic wristband
- Embedded GPS sensor provides basic navigation capabilities to tell you how far and how fast, and even how to get home
- Digital coded heart rate monitor, so you can see whether you are training too hard or not hard enough
- Training Center software, a powerful PC-based application that lets you analyze and create workouts
- Highly flexible—offers multiple sports profiles, so you can use it for running, biking, and other activities
- Easy to use—no calibration required. Just turn it on and go.

Customize your Forerunner 301 to get the most out of your training. To help you achieve your personal best, the Forerunner 301 includes the following smart features:

- Auto Pause pauses and resumes training timer based on a specified speed, so you never have to start or stop the timer

first glimpse

Advertisement



- Auto Lap records lap data when you reach a specified distance, so you never have to press the lap button
- AutoLearn feature learns user's heart rate zones, adjusting them as fitness levels improve
- Virtual Partner lets you train against a specified time, distance, or pace goals
- AutoScroll cycles through data pages during a workout

The included Training Center software lets you create custom workouts with templates from the experts at TrainingPeaks.com. The software also lets you store and analyze data using interactive graphs that chart your speed, elevation, pace, or heart rate data. Your course is overlaid on a map, so you can pinpoint specific areas and see how elevation and

other factors affect your performance. Garmin has also formed a partnership with MotionBased.com to provide Forerunner 301 users with unique Internet-based performance analysis and mapping tools for GPS and heart rate information.



first glimpse

Advertisement



Creative Zen Vision
MSRP: \$399.99
www.creative.com

Live Life Your Way With Music, Photos & Video

A digital canvas for what's important—your life and the memories it holds. Zen Vision lets you take all your movies, music, and photos in a light, pocket-sized player wherever you need to go.

Available in a sleek and spacious 30GB model, the moments you cherish are now made for sharing. You can store tens of thousands of photos, 120 hours of movies, or 15,000 songs, as well as tune into radio, record your favorite talk show, or make personal voice memos. Take a closer look at the Zen Vision. And see how it lets you live your life your way.

Big-screen blockbusters, yesterday's picnic, or even your favorite TV shows: They now all fit in your pocket. Zen Vision supports many video formats, such as AVI, DivX 4 & 5.3, XviD4, MPEG-1, MPEG-2, MPEG4-SP, WMV9, and Motion-JPEG, which means more choice and fewer restrictions on how you want to share and preserve it all.

Tens of thousands of photos: View precious memories—tens of thousands of them—in 262,144 vivid colors and 640 x 480 resolution. Complete with a thumbnail gallery, Zen Vision makes it easy to scroll through your entire photo collection.

An amazing 15,000 songs: Perfect for taking with you on the road, around the house, or in the garden. And your music will sound as good as it looks, with eight preset EQ settings and 97dB signal-to-noise ratio Zen Vision provides.

Movie and photo slideshows: Connect the Zen Vision to a projector or TV with the included AV cable and delight your friends with big-screen movie magic.

SharpPix 3.7-inch high-resolution LCD: 640 x 480 resolution on a large, transfective screen and up to 262,144 colors in your videos. You'll see crisp, clear detail in every movie or photo, even under bright lighting.

first glimpse

Advertisement



Lightweight magnesium casing: The sleek, elegant magnesium casing protects your memories in pure sophistication. Now available in magnesium black and pearl white.

Rechargeable Li-ion battery: Get more playback time with the included removable and rechargeable battery. Enjoy up to 13 hours of music or 4.5 hours of movies with each charge. The optional extended life battery pack lets you double playback time.

FM radio and recorder: If 15,000 songs aren't enough, listen to more with the integrated FM radio. Thirty-two station presets let you switch stations whenever the mood strikes. You can even record your favorite tunes or talk shows.

Personal organizer: Store and view all the information that's important to you—daily tasks, contact lists, and even a calendar—that you sync with Microsoft Outlook or edit with Creative Media Explorer.

Voice recorder: Meetings, lectures, and memos to yourself—record them all with the integrated voice recorder, which stores hundreds of hours' worth of recordings.

Full access to online music stores: Select from more than 1 million songs from myriad online music stores such as Napster To Go, Yahoo! Music Unlimited, and more. With PlaysForSure support, you will always be able to play any digital music you purchase.

Fits your life perfectly: Select from an extensive line of accessories that make Zen Vision the perfect companion, such as Wired and InfraRed remote controls, docking station, extended life battery pack, a chic leather case, an LCD screen protector, and even a car adaptor kit.

Get
CREATIVE

first glimpse

Advertisement

Creative Zen Neeon
MSRP: \$199.99
www.creative.com



The Charisma Of Zen Neeon

Charm. Dazzle. Fascinate. Let your personality shine through with the Zen Neeon, an MP3 player that lets you do just that and more. With Creative Stik-Ons (decorative skins for the player's cover), you decide how your player looks. No more boring blacks or washed-out whites. You'll be just as happy with its classic piano-black finish and interchangeable neon-like LED backlights, complete with a choice of 10 different brushed-metal backplate colors. The Zen Neeon is now available in 5GB models that hold 2,500 songs.

Life's never black or white—why should your player be any different?

Be Your Own DJ

Practice mixing and scratching on any turntable and directly record what's playing! Connect the line-in on your Zen

Neeon to your hi-fi's line-out or even to the headphone jack and record your beats. Plus, go back to your rock and roll classics and easily archive your old vinyl records without using a PC. The automatic track detection will also separate each song into different tracks.

Take It Everywhere

Zen Neeon is perfect for anyone with an on-the-go lifestyle. The built-in FM radio allows you to stay updated on all the latest news. Whether you're interested in politics or Hollywood drama, find the perfect FM radio station for you. Even record your favorite radio shows to listen to them between classes. Plus, its tiny size allows you to easily take your Neeon everywhere because it won't take up any space in your purse, pocket, or backpack.

first glimpse

Advertisement



Mix It Up

Take shuffle to a whole new level. Not only will Zen Neeon randomly shuffle through all your 2,500 songs, but the LCD display reveals more than one way to listen to your music. The possibilities are endless! Now you can find the songs you want to hear, listen to your new album, repeat your favorite songs, and more.

Never Let The Party End

Zen Neeon gives you up to 16 hours of continuous music. Simply recharge the Li-Ion battery before going on your morning jog, to your afternoon lunch, or to your midnight rendezvous, and enjoy endless hours of music anytime, anywhere.

Capture Your Thoughts

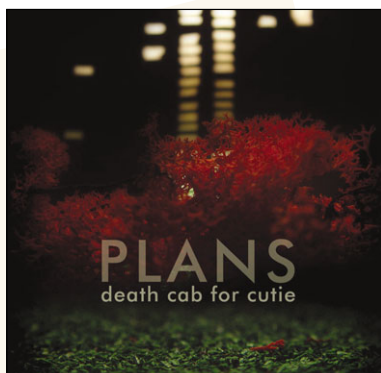
Use the built-in microphone to capture ideas and save quick reminders when you're out shopping. Plus, record long lectures when you're in important meetings or presentations.

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music & movies

m u s i c

BY ELIZABETH DIXON



Death Cab For Cutie (Atlantic Records)
"Plans"

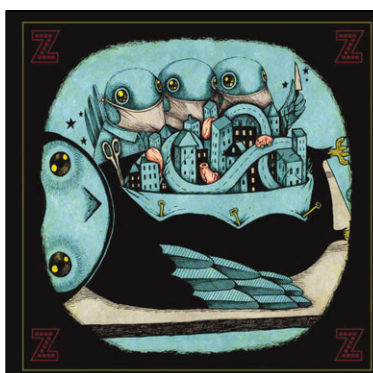
Available: Now • Price: \$15.98

At first listen, honestly, we weren't crazy about "Plans." We were prepared to be immediately emotionally enthralled, and when that wasn't the case, we longed for the day we discovered "Transatlanticism" (Death Cab's last full-length release). Then, it hit us, almost like we'd been dreaming about it—a mini epiphany of sorts. It took longer than expected for the heart of "Plans" to seep into our psyche.

It's a melancholy, coming-of-age album exploring life's ultimate, looming mystery: death. With a heartbreakingly beautiful message, "Plans" will haunt you well after its end. The message can be summed up in the ninth track, "What Sarah Said": "Love is watching someone die/So who's gonna watch you die?" Whew . . . that's deep.

After exploring the album's musings for a while, we couldn't get enough. Before we knew it, we were meditating upon its lyrics, wondering what life is all about.

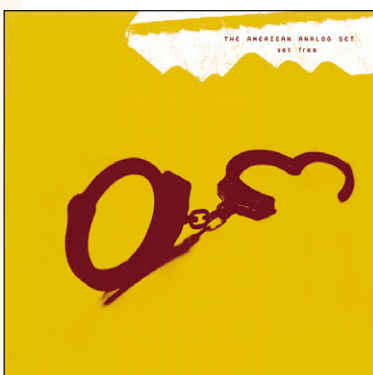
In the end we decided that's what good music does: challenges you to explore life in ways you never had before.



My Morning Jacket (ATO/RCA Records)
"Z"

Available: Oct. 4 • Price: \$13.99

My Morning Jacket last rocked the music world with "It Still Moves." Expect a new guitarist and keyboardist to change the flavor on "Z," but it's still roughly the same brand of rabble-raising Southern rock. We can't get enough of Jim James' sultry voice, that's for sure. Grr.



American Analog Set (Arts & Crafts)
"Set Free"

Available: Sept. 20 • Price: \$14.99

Soothing, subtle, charming—all accurate descriptions of AmAnSet's seventh full-length release. This band's learned from experience, and "Set Free" brings their talent full circle while showing the band's cohesiveness. This gentle and relaxing album illustrates the tireless roots of indie rock.



Dar Williams (Razor & Tie)
"My Better Self"

Available: Sept. 13 • Price: \$18.98

With a voice that belongs in opera or theatre, Dar Williams has proven her timeless quality over half a dozen albums. Her emotional lyrics speak to people whose lives are in flux, and her comforting melodies seem to make life easier, offering hope in an all too often desolate world.

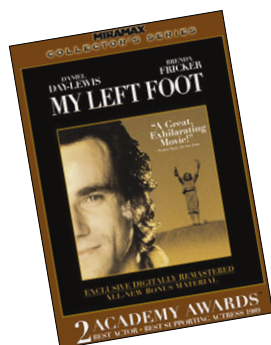


Baumer (Astro Magnetix Records)
"Come On, Feel It"

Available: Sept. 13 • Price: \$12.49

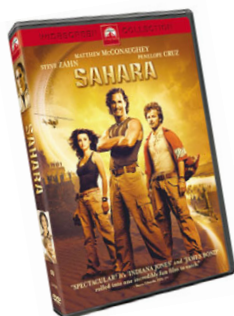
If you can't figure it out from the album's title, then we can't help you. This band gets down to business on their first LP, "Come On, Feel It," with a synth-driven sound that's dancey, but not over the top. We're especially intrigued by debut albums, and Baumer's done it right the first time around.

BY SAMIT G. CHOUDHURI

**"My Left Foot" (Collector's Series)**

\$19.95 • Available: Now

Be prepared to be touched by the heartfelt true story of Irish writer and artist Christy Brown. This extraordinary man suffered from cerebral palsy but overcame his debilitating in a most amazing way. The actor who brings Brown to life is none other than the remarkable Daniel Day-Lewis. (He won a well-deserved Oscar for his lead role in the film back in 1989.) Lewis brings Brown to the big screen in that unique way that only he is able to achieve. The film has been available on DVD in the past, but now its video and audio have been remastered at the level the film deserves. Keep your hanky handy.

**"Sahara"**

\$29.95 • Available: Now

Clive Cussler's "Sahara" comes to life with Matthew McConaughey, Steve Zahn, and Penélope Cruz. The plot follows characters popularized in the novel. Dirk Pitt (a very, very buff McConaughey) and trusty sidekick Al Giordino (Zahn) of NUMA (National Underwater and Marine Agency) find themselves headlong in an Indiana Jones-style adventure that takes them into—where else?—West Africa and the Sahara. The film's action and language is teen-friendly, so it's one you can watch with your kids. Ultimately, though, the movie is rather vacuous, but watching Dirk may be a pleasing pastime to some.

**"Crash"**

\$28.95 • Available: Sept. 6, 2005

Director Paul Haggis (who also had a writing credit on Clint Eastwood's "Million Dollar Baby") weaves together an interesting cast of characters as he showcases racial and ethnic tension in southern California. Those of you who have seen "Magnolia" will better understand the style Haggis uses to convey the story. An ensemble cast featuring Sandra Bullock, Don Cheadle, Matt Dillon, Jennifer Esposito, Brendan Fraser, Ludacris, Thandie Newton, Ryan Phillippe, and Tony Danza could easily distract the viewer from the film's focus, but the casting is flawless, and each actor inhabits his or her character with finesse. The random events draw you inexorably to a conclusion that involves each key character you meet along the way. Excellent filmmaking.

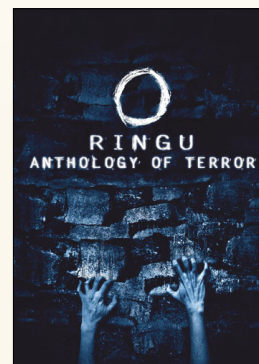
**"Lost: The Complete First Season"**

\$59.95 • Available: Sept. 6, 2005

We recommend only a handful of broadcast television shows without reservation: "24," "Alias," and "Lost" are on the shortlist. "Lost" follows 48 survivors stranded on an unidentified island after a passenger jet crashes en route to Los Angeles from Australia. Drama, suspense, action, and sci-fi are intelligently combined to keep you coming back episode after episode. For those of you who missed out on the Wednesday night shows over the past year, this seven-disc release presents the option to watch all 24 episodes in 16:9 widescreen and Dolby Digital 5.1. You'll be hooked just in time to catch Season Two when it debuts this fall.

**"The Wind In The Willows: The Complete Second Series"**

Available now. It can be tough to find quality kid-friendly content. To that end we'd like to point you toward both seasons of "The Wind In The Willows." Each delightful season features 13 episodes of Toad and the company. Let's not forget that life's simple pleasures can sometimes be as simple as music, song, tea, and jam.

**"Ringu: Anthology Of Terror"**

Available now. This box set presents four DVDs to scare you through the scary season. The four movies included in this package are "Ringu," "Rasen," "Ringu 2," and the prequel, "Ringu 0." These are the original Japanese language versions, and they are far scarier than the more recent Americanized versions, "The Ring" and "The Ring Two."

Other Notable Releases On DVD

games . . .

for you and the people in your life

BY VINCE COGLEY

Multiplatform



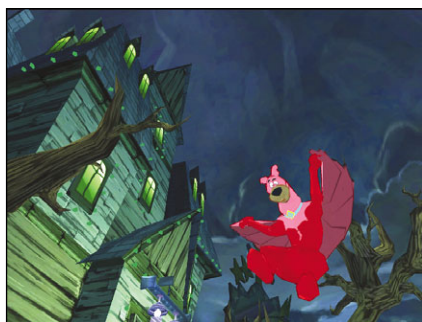
Harry Potter & The Goblet Of Fire

Pottermaniacs with a passion for gaming will likely gobble up the latest adventures of the world's most popular teenage wizard, which is based on the book and upcoming movie of the same title. Jump behind the wand of Harry, Ron, or Hermione, who are all playable characters. The game itself features a new spell-casting system and cooperative play, so the little (and possibly grown-up) Muggles in your family should be enthralled for hours.

ESRB Rating: (RP) Rating Pending
\$39.99 (Game Cube, Nintendo DS,



PlayStation 2, PlayStation Portable, Xbox); \$29.99 (Game Boy Advance)
Electronic Arts



Scooby-Doo! Unmasked

Start hoarding your Scooby Snacks, gas up the Mystery Machine, and prepare to unravel another paranormal caper as our favorite crime-fighting canine. As you progress through the game's levels (Harum Scare'em Museum, Haunted Rockin' Roller Coaster, and Shuddery Showdown in Chinatown) with Hanna-Barbara's famous Great Dane, you can collect and wear costumes that endow Scooby with special abilities. In addition to featuring the cartoon's voice actors, Adam West of TV's "Batman" fame lends his vocal cords to the game.



ESRB Rating: (E)everyone
\$29.99
THQ
www.thq.com



World Series Of Poker

Who cares if your gambling buddies left for Vegas without you? With Activision's World Series of Poker, you can feel the thrill of the final table without losing the shirt off your back. The game creates a realistic feel by giving players the opportunity to create their own poker faces, bluff, and talk a little table trash with the digital likenesses of some of the top poker professionals in the world. And if Texas Hold 'Em isn't your prime poker game, you can also try your hand at 7-card Stud, Omaha, and Razz.

ESRB Rating: (E 10+)everyone 10+
\$39.99 (Playstation Portable); \$29.99



(Game Cube, Xbox, PlayStation 2)
Activision
www.activision.com



Klutz Dial With Style

OK, how cool will your niece think this is? Today, girls spend their Phone Age on cells, not landlines, and they want their phones to say something about them. Dial With Style (\$12.95; www.klutz.com) combines middle school cell-phone mania with crafts, letting girls personalize their phones with stickers, bead strings, and Cell Gel removable phone paint. Our favorites are the Picture Droplets, which let teens and 'tweens mount tiny photos under clear plastic bubbles. Klutz is *the* source for wonderfully original books that are much more than that; they're interactive kits that inspire kids to create fun stuff. Talk about gift ideas.



Memorex TravelDrive 1GB

Big enough to be useful and inexpensive enough to give as a gift: That's Memorex's latest USB flash memory key, the slimmed-down, redesigned TravelDrive. When we say "big," we mean in storage space, not size: 1GB of room for data in a 3-inch package (\$99.99; www.memorex.com). This speedy little USB 2.0 number works with recent Windows, Mac, and Linux systems and carries a two-year warranty. There are also 128MB (about \$20), 256MB (\$39.99), 512MB (\$59.99), and 2GB (\$179.99) versions ready to hit the road.



TDK Batman Begins CD-Rs

You may wish it were only your 9-year-old nephew swooping around the house and whispering, "I'm Batman," but don't feel bad if your significant other occasionally feels the need to strike terror in the hearts of the pets and house plants, too. At least he's easy to shop for. Give him a 10-pack of CD-Rs (\$9.99; www.tdk.com) imprinted with five different scenes inspired by the movie "Batman Begins." They're 52X, 700MB discs, packed in slim cases. And they're cheaper than a cape.

... & gifts

on the lighter side of technology

BY MARTY SEMS

What They're Saying

What CE Device Do I Use Most & Why?

by Mridu Khullar

In a world full of digital cameras, cell phones, MP3 players, and an assortment of bright, shiny toys, what's a gal to choose? We rounded up four tech-savvy women from different stages in their lives and asked them to pick their favorites. Here's what they said.

Sarah Lyons, Single Woman



At just 26, Sarah Lyons is the editor of a mortgage magazine and co-author of *Reverse Mortgage For Dummies* and is now diving headfirst into the creation of her own Web site. Like her quiet and hurried office environment, Sarah is a fast-paced independent woman with a mission.

And her device of choice? The photographic capabilities of her HP Photosmart 435. "It lets me capture the best, most fun moments of my life without having to wait to find out my head was cut off in a picture that is irreplaceable." Sarah loves that she can take the same shot over and over until it's perfect and that she's able to send them to all her friends without having to get dozens of prints made.

As a practical person, Sarah went for the camera that would give her great quality pictures at an affordable price—at press time, a refurbished model of this older 3.1MP camera was available for under \$90 on HP's Web site (www.hp.com).

Lilly Allison, New Empty-Nester

A volunteer church secretary and freelance writer, Lilly Allison, 46, is a new empty-nester with 18- and 20-year-olds in college and her oldest, who spent her summer in Africa. While Lilly doesn't own a Blackberry, she's very much a gadget girl, with her Sanyo PM-8200 cell phone by her side 24/7.

Lilly's idea of a perfect vacation is heading to Africa for an adventure, and she loves that her phone takes care of this part of her personality by letting her check her email, take pictures, record memos, browse the Web, download new ringtones, and, of course, make phone calls—all on the go.

But the best feature of all? "If my husband wants to know what a sports score is, we can just check it out on the phone," says Lilly. "Saves me from having to listen to hours of ESPN just to get one score!"

Can she go without her phone for a day? "A day without my phone? I can't even think about it!"



Jennifer McCay, Business Woman



In her late twenties, Jennifer McCay owns her own marketing firm, Avenue East Communications (www.avenueeast.com), and is a huge fan of digital gadgets after selling herself on them in her ad agency days when she did marketing work for Sony.

Her home office is proof of that. In addition to two laptops, cell phones, VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), a laser printer, and a fax machine, Jennifer and her husband also have a network server, a Sun Microsystems server, a dedicated Web server, wireless LAN (local-area network), and high-speed Internet.

Jennifer also loves traveling. She has been all over Europe and now is exploring the terrain in the United States, having just moved to Los Angeles from Germany a few months ago.

Her favorite in her collection of pretty shiny digital toys is her voice recorder, which is one of the midrange digital recorders from a couple of years ago. "I love my digital voice recorder. I always wanted one, and my husband got it for me a couple Christmases ago. It lets you record up to a few hours of audio and upload it to your computer to edit it," says Jennifer.

Other than the fact that it lets her feel like a private detective who dictates everything she sees, Jennifer loves that she can take it in the car with her and record her ideas when she doesn't have a notebook on which to jot them down. Given that the vast majority of her work (and play) is writing-related or developing marketing strategies for people, she never knows when an idea will come to her. The recorder really helps. And the show-off factor isn't too bad, either.

Sandra Ray, Mother Of Three

Sandra Ray, 35, mother of three and an "accidental techie," is the assistant director of a nonprofit organization, Casa de Amigos of Midland, Texas, and is in charge of its entire IT department, despite having degrees in English and psychology. While she may spend her days surrounded by two LANs with 43 workstations, four servers, and a VoIP call center, the slick Motorola V220 cell phone is Sandra's gadget of choice.



"I think the reason it's my favorite is that it allows me to stay connected when I'm traveling," says Sandra. "It has a camera, and I take pictures of my kids and our family functions so I don't feel distant when I'm out of town."

But it's not all work and no play for Sandra. While she's downloaded quite a few games, her absolute favorite is Bejeweled. "I have an earpiece to go with the phone so I can hear the sound without bothering everyone around me," she says. "The sound of the game drives my family crazy!"

Sandra also enjoys text messaging with her sister. Because they both have busy jobs, they hardly have enough time to catch up over the phone. The messaging lets them keep each other posted on the latest.

CE Essentials



Sarah's Pick

HP Photosmart 435
(\$89.99; refurbished; www.hp.com)



Lilly's Pick

Sanyo PM-8200
(\$229.99; www.sanyo.com)



Jennifer's Pick

Sony ICD-P17 voice recorder
(no longer available)



Sandra's Pick

Motorola V220 cell phone
(\$79.99; www.motorola.com)

Ms. ETECHQUETTE



esident technology
etiquette expert Ms.

Etechiquette gives *CE*

Lifestyles readers some needed guidance when it comes to proper manners whilst using their electronic devices.

DEAR MS. ETECHQUETTE,

A so-called "friend" I met in a fashion forum I belong to used strong language towards me in an online discussion we all had about New York City's Fashion Week. My other online buddies told me to shake it off; that it was "just a message board." I still think it was rude of her, especially because she probably doesn't talk like that in real life! What do you think?

—HURT FEELINGS IN HAWAII

Gentle Emailer,

The first rule of online etiquette is to remember there is a real-live human on the other side of your connection. Your "fashion friend" should definitely not have said anything to you she would not have said face-to-face. But interestingly you did not tell Ms. Etechiquette the context of your discussion. Perhaps, dear emailer, you committed your own fashion faux pas? Do we see shoulder pads in that blouse? We are willing to give you the benefit of the doubt, but as with all things, "heal thyself" first, lest your online foe be your best friend. ▮

DEAR MS. ETECHQUETTE,

I was out to dinner with my boyfriend when he received a call on his cell phone. Much to my annoyance, he answered it and chatted away for five minutes! I was shocked, and I didn't know what to say, so I just dropped the issue. Next time, what should I do?

—LEFT OUT IN LOUISIANA

Gentle Emailer,

Before we answer your question, we have one of our own: What restaurants have you been frequenting? Hopefully, they are superior enough to keep your friend's attention, but if they aren't, he has most certainly committed the one of the greatest breaches of *CE* etiquette: phoning during dinner. The next time your boyfriend chooses a call over his calamari, gently put your hand on his arm and say (in a low voice), "Honey, we're eating. Could you please call him back?" Before he drops you off at home, discuss turning off all cell phones during dinner to prevent the situation from arising in the future. ▮

DEAR MS. ETECHQUETTE,

I was on the subway, going home after a long day's work, when a young girl sat next to me. She pulled out her portable audio player and cranked up the volume so loud I could hear the lyrics! I work hard and like to relax on

the way home. Should I have said anything to her about how disruptive she was being?

—TIRED IN TOLEDO

Gentle Emailer,

Nobody deserves disruption in a public place. But Ms. Etechiquette wonders if this young girl's music was more Rascals than Gorillaz, would you be more accepting? Teenagers, after all, will be teenagers. The next time you find yourself in this situation, you can either politely and calmly ask her to turn her music down, or you could simply move to another seat on the subway. Better yet, bring your own audio player; you might find music to be an enjoyable and relaxing way to wind down after work, and you won't be so distracted with the comings and goings of your fellow subway passengers. ▮



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